

# **The Reading Lives of English Men and Women, 1695-1830**

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Polly Elizabeth Bull

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis, presented by me for examination of the PhD degree, is solely my own work and where contributions from others have been included, they have been clearly indicated and credited.

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Polly Elizabeth Bull

Date

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the reading lives of eighteenth-century English men and women. Diaries of the middling sort and the gentry show that reading entwined daily routines and long-term aspirations. This life-writing also demonstrates that readers performed and contextualised reading within a specific cultural milieu. Finally, autobiographical accounts reveal that books could challenge or reinforce contemporary constructs of gender. These three strands of readership—self, culture and gender—weave throughout the thesis.

The first chapter is an analysis of the expectations for ‘ideal reading’. Some advice literature attempted to dictate engagement with books, often warning of the ‘dangers’ of certain reading, particularly for women. While much historiography focuses on prescriptions of print culture, this thesis shows that practice did not live up to precept. Case studies of real readers present examples of proactive reading. A group of male ‘occupational readers’ relied on books for education and training, piety, sociability and the reckoning of financial accounts. Propagandist Thomas Hollis gifted books in the 1750s and 1760s in order to influence collective political opinion through the reading of specific liberty texts, chosen according to his conception of masculine civic duty. Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Montagu devoted themselves to scholarly reading, which enabled exceptional authorial achievements in the second half of the century. From 1773 to 1830, Anna Larpent judged all her reading critically within a domestic setting, demonstrating an assiduous commitment to literary review. Finally, Anne Lister interpreted texts to reinforce her sense of social distinction and to facilitate her same-sex love affairs. This thesis provides critical new insights into the history of reading in the eighteenth century, showing that men and women, unrestricted by advice literature, hoped to gain a multiplicity of opportunities through active ‘reading for life’.

## **Preface**

I owe my first heartfelt debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Amanda Vickery. She has provided invaluable guidance, enthusiastic encouragement and ceaseless wisdom. Since I arrived eagerly upon Britain's green shores, I have found her to be a source of tremendous inspiration both in work and in life. Her infectious passion and unquestionable brilliance as a historian have been marvellous to witness. Amanda has made me feel like anything is possible and she will always be one of my most important role models.

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Finally, to my family, I thank Simon and Holly Bull for moral support. Sophie Bull, my closest ally, has always inspired me with her dynamic intelligence. Lastly, I thank my parents, Andrew and Harriet Bull. They have provided books from a young age, but more importantly, they have loved and cared for me from the beginning. I dedicate this thesis to them.

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## List of Conventions

In all quotations from manuscript diaries and letters, the spelling and grammar used in the original source have been kept. In published versions of diaries and letters, I have followed the editor's conventions. In excerpts from diaries and letters, words in bracketed italics are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| BIWLD | British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries Online          |
| BLARS | Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service           |
| BOD   | Bodleian Library, Oxford                                      |
| BL    | British Library   |
| ECCO  | Eighteenth Century Collections Online                         |
| HL    | Huntington Library, California                                |
| LA    | Lincolnshire Archives   |
| MRCL  | Manchester Room at City Library                               |
| NRO   | Norfolk Record Office   |
| OED   | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> : also online                |
| ODNB  | <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> : also online. |
| SHC   | Somerset Heritage Centre                                      |
| WYAS  | West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale                    |

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Reading experiences shaped the lives of literate men and women in the long eighteenth century. The middling sort and the gentry relied on books on a daily basis. For example, religious practices depended on the regular reading of specific printed texts. Routine reading could influence long-term aspirations as well. Books did not inspire these aspirations necessarily, but the readers assessed in this thesis believed that books could enable achievement. This belief in the power of reading to stimulate improvement, both individually and collectively, could define men and women's engagement with books in the period, which I have termed, 'reading for life'. In this thesis, such reading has been conceptualised in terms of self, gender and culture.<sup>1</sup> 'Self' refers to an individual's reading behaviour, as well as subjectivity and desires for personal improvement. 'Gender' relates to reading's influence on individual and collective interpretations of masculinity and femininity. Finally, 'culture' refers to contemporary societal influences on readership, such as religion, education, and sociability, as well as groups of readers who comprised collective reading 'cultures'.

To understand eighteenth-century reading lives, this thesis analyses eight male readers and four female readers who lived between 1695 to 1830. These real-life cases have been compared to a study of the contemporary prescriptive and educational literature that sought to map out ideal reading practices in the period. Contextually, this chapter was conceived in response to much historiography on reading which has taken advice literature's guidelines to be indicative of actual experiences with books, an inaccurate premise. The focus of the thesis is on lived

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<sup>1</sup> These will be defined further below. See pp. 18-19.

experience and the nature of print consumption for the readers analysed, as they understood it and recorded in their memoirs.

### **Sources and Definitions**

This thesis takes 'reading' to mean the individual and social process of mentally digesting printed texts, as found in books and other print forms such as newspapers, pamphlets and periodicals. The process involves more than the relationship between the reader and the text; it also includes the physical, temporal and cultural space within which the engagement takes place, along with the reality of the material text. The focus here is predominantly on the reading of printed texts, with the acknowledgement that the reading and circulation of manuscripts was still of great importance to eighteenth-century men and women. In one case study, the definition of print reading has been stretched to include the reading of objects to demonstrate the relevance of the material book for eighteenth-century readers, as well as the literary meanings given to artefacts such as coins, statues and other pieces of fine art.<sup>2</sup> The sources used to study 'reading lives' have been primarily diaries, with one case of letter-analysis where a diary has not been available.

Sources for other histories of reading in this period have included a range of evidence such as library borrowing records, bookshop accounts, book catalogues, book society records, inventories, contemporary texts (fiction and non-fiction), marginalia and commonplace books.<sup>3</sup> This thesis uses diaries as

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<sup>2</sup> J. Rose's influential study on the intellectual life of the working class in the nineteenth century takes 'reading' to mean readers' responses to all kinds of cultural events, including films and radio, as well as books. His sources include autobiography, library borrowing records and surveys. J. Rose, *The intellectual life of the British working classes*, (London, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> See R. Altick, *The English common reader* (Cambridge, 1957) and J. Fergus, *Provincial readers in eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 2006) for studies which incorporate library borrowing and book purchasing. See H.J. Jackson, *Marginalia: readers writing in books* (New Haven, 2002) and J. Scott-Warren, 'Reading graffiti in the early modern book', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73 (Sept., 2010), pp. 363-381

the primary source base in order to understand how reading fitted with a reader's life as a whole, emphasising issues of routine, space and sociability, elements that might be missing from studies of these other sources alone. For example, library-borrowing records, while key to book history interested in rates of lending and genre, would not provide an understanding of how readers digested texts, or how books fit into daily life.

Original manuscript versions of all the diaries have been investigated with the exception of one male diary.<sup>4</sup> In addition to original diary and letter manuscripts, this thesis consults edited scholarly publications of the diaries as well as published letters. Thus, the work examines the original manuscript and published diaries of John Cannon (1684-1743),<sup>5</sup> Matthew Flinders (1751-1802),<sup>6</sup> John Marsh (1752-1828),<sup>7</sup> Sylas Neville (1741-1840),<sup>8</sup> Edmund Harrold (1679-1721),<sup>9</sup> James Woodforde (1740-1803),<sup>10</sup>

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for work on marginalia. See D. Allan, *Commonplace books and reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge, 2010) and A. Moss, *Printed commonplace-books and the structuring of renaissance thought* (Oxford, 1996) for studies of commonplace books.

<sup>4</sup> The published diary of Dudley Ryder alone provided sufficient evidence of reading habits for this project.

<sup>5</sup> John Cannon (1684-1743) was an excise official and autobiographer. T. Hitchcock, 'Cannon, John (1684-1743)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (subsequently ODNB), (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66791>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; Somerset Heritage Centre (subsequently SHC); The Chronicles of John Cannon, DD/SAS/C1193/4; J. Money, ed., *The chronicles of John Cannon, excise officer and writing master, part 1, 1684-1733, and part 2, 1734-1743* (Oxford, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Flinders (1751-1802) was an apothecary. No ODNB entry available. Lincolnshire Archive (subsequently LA), Matthew Flinders Diary, Flinders 1 and 2; M. Beardsley and N. Bennett, eds., 'Gratefull to providence': *the diary and accounts of Matthew Flinders, vol. I: 1775-1784* (Woodbridge, 2007) and M. Beardsley and N. Bennett, eds., 'Gratefull to providence': *The diary and accounts of Matthew Flinders vol. II: 1785-1802* (Woodbridge, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> John Marsh (1752-1828) was a musician and writer. B. Robins, 'Marsh, John (1752-1828)', ODNB (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18113>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; Huntington Library (subsequently HL), 'A History of my Private Life', HM 54457, Vols. 1-37; B. Robins, ed., *The John Marsh journals: the life and times of a gentleman composer (1752-1828)* (Stuyvesant, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Sylas Neville (1741-1840) trained as a doctor. No ODNB entry available. Norfolk Record Office (subsequently NRO), Sylas Neville diaries, MC 7; B. Cozens-Hardy, ed., *The diary of Sylas Neville, 1767-1788* (London, 1950).

<sup>9</sup> Edmund Harrold (1679-1721) was a wigmaker. No ODNB entry available. Manchester Room at City Library (subsequently MRCL), M567 (microfilm), Owen MSS Vol. 12 p139-218, p. 224-227; C. Horner, ed., *The diary of Edmund Harrold, wigmaker of Manchester 1712-15* (Aldershot, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> James Woodforde (1740-1803) was a Church of England clergyman. R. L. Winstanley, 'Woodforde, James (1740-1803)', ODNB (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38150>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; Bodleian Library (subsequently BOD), Diary of James Woodforde, MSS Eng. Misc. f. 101-112,

and Anne Lister (1791-1840).<sup>11</sup> I have undertaken extensive analysis of the manuscript diaries of Thomas Hollis (1720-1774),<sup>12</sup> Anna Larpent (1758-1832),<sup>13</sup> and Catherine Talbot (1721-1770), as well as Talbot's published letters,<sup>14</sup> for three other studies in which published diaries do not exist. The research of Dudley Ryder (1691-1756)<sup>15</sup> was based on the published diary alone and Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800)<sup>16</sup> was studied through the

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MSS. Eng. Misc. f. 155-7; R. Blythe, ed., *The diary of a country parson, 1758-1802* (Norwich, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Anne Lister (1791-1840) estate owner and traveller. E. Baigent, 'Lister, Anne (1791-1840)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37678>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale (subsequently WYAS), Anne Lister's diary, SH 7/ML/E/1-13 (microfilm); H. Whitbread, *I know my own heart: the diaries of Anne Lister, 1791-1840* (London, 1988); H. Whitbread, *No priest but love: the journals of Anne Lister from 1824 to 1826* (New York, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hollis (1720-1774) was a political propagandist. C. Bonwick, 'Hollis, Thomas (1720-1774)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13568>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; Justin Champion's private collection, microfilm copy of T. Hollis manuscript diary, 1759-1761. Original held at Harvard, Houghton Library, Hollis, MS Eng 1191.

<sup>13</sup> Anna Larpent (1758-1832) was a famous diarist and reader. L. F. Cody, 'Larpent, Anna Margaretta (1758-1832)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65588>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; HL, Anna Larpent's diary, HM 31201; British Library (subsequently BL) microfilm copy of Larpent's diary, M1016/1-7.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Talbot (1721-1770) was a scholar and an author. She only published a few papers during her lifetime, but after her death, her friend, Elizabeth Carter, published Talbot's *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week* (1770) and *Essays on Various Subjects* (1772). R. Zuk, 'Talbot, Catherine (1721-1770)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26921>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service (subsequently BLARS), Diary of Catherine Talbot at Wrest, L31/106; M. Pennington, ed., *A series of letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot from the year 1741 to 1770: to which are added letters from Mrs. Carter to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Vesey between the years 1767 and 1787*, v.1. (London, 1808), accessed through British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries (subsequently BIWLD). Published online by Alexander Street Press (Chicago, 2008). <http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com/>

<sup>15</sup> Dudley Ryder (1691-1756) was a judge. D. Lemmings, 'Ryder, Sir Dudley (1691-1756)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24394>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; W. Matthews, ed., *The diary of Dudley Ryder, 1715-1716* (London, 1939).

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) was a literary hostess and author. She was author of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* (1769), but also famous as the 'Queen of the Blues', who hosted conversation parties, or salons, which brought together prominent members of London literary and artistic society. B. B. Schnorrenberg, 'Montagu, Elizabeth (1718-1800)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19014>, accessed 09 Apr. 2012]; HL, Elizabeth Montagu letters, 1750-1751, manuscript MO 5716, MO 5721, MO 2234, MO 2248, MO 114; BL photocopies of Elizabeth Montagu letters, RP 238; M. Pennington, ed., *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu, between the years 1775 and 1770*, 3 vols. (London, 1817); M. Montagu, ed., *The letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some of the letters of her correspondents*, 4 vols. (London, 1810-13); and E. Eger, *Bluestocking feminism: writings of the bluestocking circle, 1738-1785*, vol I, Elizabeth Montagu (London, 1999).

examination of unpublished and published letters. In addition to interrogating diaries and letters, I have analysed prescriptive literature for the study of the ideal reader. These publications included educational manuals and advice books throughout the period.

It is important to note that, while most of the evidence comes from the life-writing of diaries, some sources (those used for Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Montagu) consist of letters.<sup>17</sup> Letters and diaries differ in potential audience and purpose. At a basic level, letters are written for communication, while diaries can serve as personal records. These fundamental functions are obvious, but not the sole explanations behind authorial intention. Letters written to transmit information to another also contain a psycho-social dimension for the writer. Not only can the letter act as a virtual ‘conversation’, an exchange of ideas or feelings, it can also be a remedy for anxieties of separation between writer and recipient. Similarly, diaries can serve as a kind of internal conversation and allow for the wording out of mental entanglement. Letter-writers and diarists can write for a specific addressee or for their own personal records, but they can also write for a wider audience, sometimes to be read aloud, as well as publication for the eyes of posterity. While it is necessary to recognise distinctions between diaries and letters, both can be used to trace ‘reading for life’ because they describe real people’s encounters with text.

This thesis deals with the period between 1695 and 1830. These were the years marked by the end of the Licensing Act (1695), which allowed a greater number of books on the market, and the development of publishing as a specialist commercial

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<sup>17</sup> Diary-writing will be discussed further below, p. x. For explanations of letter-writing conventions see C. Brant, *Eighteenth-century letters and British culture* (Basingstoke, 2006), Chapter 1; D. Goodman, *Becoming a woman in the age of letters* (Ithaca, 2009), Part II; R. Perry, *Women, letters, and the novel* (New York, 1980), Chapter 3; S. Whyman, *The pen and the people: English letter-writers, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 2009).



venture as well as the industrialisation of printing techniques in the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> The period is also a reasonable definition of the 'long eighteenth century'. These years reveal a historiographical episode that included a culture of reading based on traditions of Protestant devotional practice as well as a dissemination of new ideas of politeness, Enlightenment and education, in addition to varied negotiations of gender influenced by the consumption of books.<sup>19</sup> Based on the cases studied in this time span, there was continuity in reading's ability to provide individual and social opportunities, even though readers' goals for reading varied.

The case study readers ranged socially from lower middling sorts to wealthy gentry. Obviously, this is only a subsection of the whole population, partly chosen because this group enjoyed access to books and the ability to read. Those lower down on the social ladder were more likely to have been illiterate, though literacy levels did increase over the period and servants and labourers had increasing access to books through circulating and parish libraries.<sup>20</sup> One reason for choosing this middling section of the population is that such readers sometimes left elaborate records of their reading habits within their diaries. The wealthiest elites could have left similarly detailed accounts, but the focus here is on those in the middle for the sake of cohesion. The range in this thesis from middling tradesmen to landowning gentry

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<sup>18</sup> M.F. Suarez, S.J. and M.L. Turner, eds., *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain, vol. V, 1695-1830* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement in Europe promoting the application of reason to an understanding of the world. While originally understood as a movement of a few intellectuals, or philosophes, the definition has been broadened to include thinkers in a wide variety of disciplines, understanding of the movement in national contexts, as well as a merging with notions of the 'public sphere' and sociability. See J. Robertson, 'Women and enlightenment: a historiographical conclusion', S. Knott and B. Taylor, eds., *Women, gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005) pp. 692-704, 693.

<sup>20</sup> See pp. 33-34 of this Introduction for more on literacy. See Whyman, *Pen*, p. 9, for a detailed discussion of literacy down the social scale.

suggests the extent to which reading pervaded a large portion eighteenth-century lives.<sup>21</sup>

The case study readers were chosen to represent a diversity of middling and gentry reading lives. The group of occupational male readers includes the traditional professions—a lawyer, doctor and clergyman—as well as middling sorts—a wigmaker, excise officer, apothecary and a composer. This group represents reading's relationship to middling masculinity. Thomas Hollis, a wealthy man of leisure and property, was chosen for his reading and distributing of printed political philosophy. The lives of Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Montagu represented female readers empowered to public recognition and literary achievement. Talbot and Montagu were of a similar social level to Hollis, in wealth and status. Alike in economic background, Anna Larpent was a mother and wife dedicated to her family, as well as a courageous literary critic within the pages of her diary. Finally, Anne Lister, while famous as the 'first modern lesbian', was a key early nineteenth-century example of strenuous auto-didacticism and conscientious reading.<sup>22</sup> Lister, a member of the landed gentry, managed an estate that she inherited from her uncle. The readers' lives ranged geographically across all of England. They lived and/or had interests in the present-day counties of Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Greater London, Bedfordshire, Kent, Sussex, Berkshire, Hampshire, Dorset and Northumberland.

In this thesis, 'gender' is understood to mean the historically-determined social and cultural meanings attached to one's biological sex, as well as the relationships between these meanings.<sup>23</sup> The research here focuses on the reading patterns of

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<sup>21</sup> See p. 34 below on literacy.

<sup>22</sup> R. Norton, 'Anne Lister, The First Modern Lesbian', *Lesbian History*, 1 (2003), <<http://rictornorton.co.uk/lister.htm>>

<sup>23</sup> J.W. Scott definition of gender differs somewhat, in that she includes the concept of power relationships. 'The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships

women and men in relation to contemporary gender norms, particularly codes of femininity and masculinity. This thesis aims to interpret gender's relationship to reading, as well as its interaction, via readership, with notions of the 'self' (a person's sense of individual autonomy) and 'culture' (collective social influences of the period).<sup>24</sup> These interconnections are understood best through the study of both women and men's autobiographical accounts of reading habits.

Examining both male and female readers is a method not often found in the field of reading history. Reading historians, due to difficulties with evidence, find it hard to analyse women as they do men and thus do not try, or else women form the sole focus of a study as in the extremely valuable work on women and print by Jacqueline Pearson, Kathryn Shevelow, Kate Flint, Naomi Tadmor and Edith Snook.<sup>25</sup> A good analysis of both male and female readers is found in research by Jan Fergus, but her work concentrates on rates of book-buying rather than autobiographical memoirs of reading encounters.<sup>26</sup> In this analysis of both men and women, I hope to forge new pathways into the understanding of gender's relationship to the reading experience in this period as part of a recuperative project to redress the existing historiographical imbalance.

## Diaries

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based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power'. J.W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91 (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075, p. 1067. See pp. 47-55 below for historiographical debates on gender.

<sup>24</sup> Meanings of the self and culture will be explored further below. See pp. 23-25 (self) and p. 29 (culture).

<sup>25</sup> See J. Pearson, *Women's reading in Britain, 1750-1835: a dangerous recreation* (Cambridge, 1999); K. Shevelow, *Women and print culture: the construction of femininity in the early periodical* (London, 1989); K. Flint, *The woman reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford, 1995); N. Tadmor, 'In the even my wife read to me': women, reading and household life in the eighteenth century', in Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor, eds., *The practice and representation of reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 162-174; E. Snook, *Women, reading, and the cultural politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Fergus, *Readers*.

The majority of my sources used to study reading patterns in the case studies has comprised of diaries. As artefacts of autobiographical writing, these contain narratives of daily life and habits, invaluable to the social historian.<sup>27</sup> As Philip Woodfine puts it, 'of wider social history interest is the evidence that diaries and journals can provide of membership in sociable book clubs and of reflection on reading and its importance to the diarists, their families and friends'.<sup>28</sup> Diaries for eighteenth-century men and women were invaluable aids in the process of reading. David Allan has written most extensively about the value and purpose of commonplacing and the relevance of manual transcription of texts in an era in which books were still expensive items to buy.<sup>29</sup> Besides commonplacing, diaries served a variety of other purposes to benefit reading, as discussed below.

It is important to note that diary-writing was not an impulsive act, in which thoughts were transmitted instantaneously, and unfiltered, from one's mind to paper. Adam Smyth has researched four distinct types of autobiography in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not including the traditional diary, and found that 'life-writing was produced through a lengthy chain of textual transmission'.<sup>30</sup> Studying life-writing sources that have traditionally been overlooked by historians—the printed almanac, annotated with handwritten notes; the financial account; the commonplace book; and the parish register—Smyth shows how 'records were shunted from text to text', sometimes

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Fothergill puts it more disparagingly: 'The great mass of diary-writing is poor stuff, interesting only to the antiquarian or social historian'. R. A. Fothergill, *Private chronicles: a study of English diaries* (London, 1974), p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> P. Woodfine, '"Nothing but dust & the most minute particles": historians and the evidence of journals and diaries', D. Doll and J. Munns, eds., *Recording and reordering: essays on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-Century diary and journal* (Cranbury, 2006), pp. 185-210.

<sup>29</sup> Allan, *Commonplace*, p. 258. Commonplacing was the practice of extracting portions of a text into a blank book designed for that purpose. It was to aid one's digesting of text, both in its memorisation and later use in conversation or writing. For a history of commonplacing see Chapter 3 in Allan's book, pp. 35-45.

<sup>30</sup> A. Smyth, *Autobiography in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 2.

ending up in diaries.<sup>31</sup> This process of transmission is evident in the eighteenth-century diaries used here as well. Indeed, eighteenth-century readers and writers engaged in extensive transcription practices, such as copying letters and extracts from books, sometimes into the pages of their diaries or commonplace books.

Historians have studied the different genres of autobiographical writing. Categories include pocket books, the pious diary, commonplace books, and the keeping of accounts, amongst many others. These categories are very useful for locating and organising one's sources. However, on close examination of some of the more elaborate texts, the researcher discovers considerable variety in format and approach within each document of life-writing. The diaries studied here differed in structure and in each writer's intentions. Furthermore, many contained elements from several different standard generic categories.<sup>32</sup> Of all the diarists studied, Hollis, Larpent and Lister were the only ones who provided descriptions of almost every day.

John Marsh's diary was a narrative of life events. He wrote retrospectively, with the aid of his pocket books, often not recording the exact day of events, but simply the month. Matthew Flinders used his diary to provide short narratives of daily events alongside financial account-keeping. His diary provides evidence of stoic resignation to providence. John Cannon wrote grandiosely as an author, also writing half of his 'book' in retrospect, intending the diary for eventual publication. Within the final document (revised several times) he included genealogical charts and drawings, records of daily weather and news, as well as long-term and short-term narration of his life 'story'. Edmund Harrold's account was deeply confessional, appealing to religion, particularly his reading of devotional texts, for guidance. James

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<sup>31</sup> Smyth, *Autobiography*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> However, to the present-day reader, all diaries follow a forward progression through time, even if they were not written that way originally.

Woodford provided brief summaries of daily events, often no more than a few words on a meal. His was the least reflective, and mainly a text of accounts, both personal and financial. His financial account keeping was most assiduous in his early diaries while a student, while his later diaries contained more narration of events. Sylas Neville's journal recording daily thoughts and events. The content of his writing mostly revolved around his political interests and activities, as well as complaints of ailments. Finally, Dudley Ryder's diary as a young man provides evidence of professional training, along with self-conscious attempts to perfect politeness.

Thomas Hollis's diary contained daily accounts of activities related to his propaganda mission. These comprised of meetings and preparation at home of gifts. Even on days when he described little else he would provide a short entry such as, 'At home all day. Read'. Catherine Talbot's diary written during her visit to Wrest Park detailed daily accounts of time spent with Jemima Yorke. Anna Larpent used her diary to record elaborate descriptions of her thoughts and feelings, most characteristically in relation to her reading. Her diaries also reveal her as a cultural critic, penning thoughtful reviews on books and plays. Sometimes Larpent enclosed opinions within quotation marks as well as indicated her review with a small drawing of a hand pointing.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Larpent sometimes used her diary to commonplace passages from books she'd read, as well to list books she had read, wanted to read and intended to obtain. Larpent's records also display evidence of religious devotion and contemplation as well as self-reflection. She considered her writing a 'second conscience'.

Finally, Anne Lister wrote the most excessive accounts of her daily life, detailing the minutiae of the weather (including the

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<sup>33</sup> See Allan, *Commonplace*, Ch. 8 on critical autonomy which discusses reader literary criticism within commonplace books. pp. 101-119.

air pressure) and the times she woke up and undertook each activity. She used the coded sections to expound upon her romantic relationships, using the diary as a forum to express frustrations. In addition, her diary served as a literary aid to her reading. She wrote symbols in the margins of her diary to correspond with her own marginalia inscribed in her books. Like Larpent, she recorded lists of books read as well as books she intended to read. Lister's diary also contains examples of commonplacing in her transcriptions of extracts from library books as well as title pages as reminders of library books she intended to buy later, or just as a record of what she had read. She also copied notes from loose paper into commonplace extracts in her diary.

In relation to gender, some historians have analysed the position of women's diaries over the centuries as records of the self not confined by male hierarchy. Harriet Blodgett argues that, 'the very nature of the diary as a personal record counters the limiting and devaluing of the female self entailed by accommodation to a male-dominated culture'.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, Jane Hamlett has noted how male diaries contained fewer details on domestic life than women's diaries, and tended to focus on career.<sup>35</sup> However, other historians have suggested that men and women's diaries reveal a variety of different 'selves' and a schematic division does not represent the full diversity.<sup>36</sup> In this thesis, there is not a simple distinction between diarists' representations of the male and female 'self'. Almost all the women and men reflected on their specific mental and social worlds in relation to their own negotiations of gender.

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<sup>34</sup> H. Blodgett, *Centuries of female days. English women's private diaries* (Gloucester, 1989), p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> J. Hamlett, 'Materialising gender: identity and middle-class domestic interiors, 1850-1910', unpublished PhD thesis, London, 2005, p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> H. Wilcox, E. Hobby, H. Hind, E. Graham, eds., *Her own life: autobiographical writings by seventeenth-century Englishwomen* (London, 2002), p. 19.

Many historians agree that the seventeenth century in England saw the beginning of a 'widening stream of narrative autobiographical discourse'.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, an important element in this development was the practice of keeping pious diaries in compliance with tenets of evangelical Protestantism (or 'Puritanism'). Kathleen Lynch has noted that private devotional writing was the 'very engine of Protestant devotional life', alongside the reading of conduct manuals and the attendance of sermons.<sup>38</sup> Despite being seemingly 'private' documents, these texts were also evidence of sociability and reading communities.<sup>39</sup> The eighteenth-century diaries studied in this thesis were not solely devotional texts. Indeed, historians usually characterise the pious diary as a trademark of the seventeenth century, while eighteenth-century narratives promote the 'rise of the novel' as a distinguishing feature. Nevertheless, in the diaries studied here, writers often exhibited devotional and confessional practices and religious resignation.

Literary historians find diaries particularly useful for decoding the complexities of the 'self', as already suggested. Eighteenth-century diaries provided writers with helpful forums for personal reflection, often centred on reading. Reading, aided by life-writing, enabled self-improvement.<sup>40</sup> However, this is not to argue for a creation of the self in the eighteenth century. As Smyth has suggested, there are many problems with the 'birth of subjectivity' theory, one of which being that it is claimed by historians of many different periods.<sup>41</sup> He notes that subjectivity

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<sup>37</sup> M. Mascuch, *Origins of the modern individualist self: autobiography and self-identity in England 1591-1791* (Cambridge 1997), p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> K. Lynch, *Protestant autobiography in the seventeenth-century Anglophone world* (Oxford, 2012), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Lynch, *Autobiography*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> See T. Field, *Form and function in the diary novel* (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 31.

<sup>41</sup> Smyth, *Autobiography*, p. 11. F. Nussbaum has argued for the development of a 'gendered bourgeois subjectivity' in the eighteenth century, for example. She sees this period as a time in which identity was in a particular crisis. F. A. Nussbaum, *The autobiographical subject: gender and ideology in eighteenth-century England* (Baltimore, 1989), pp. xiii-xiv. D. Warhman has suggested that there was a radical transformation of notions of self and personal identity at the end of the eighteenth



in his period was not novel, but people were interested in finding new ways to represent the self in 'diary, portrait, lyric, soliloquy' etc.<sup>42</sup>

While the eighteenth century does not show a birth of subjectivity either, this thesis reveals that, through the process of reading, men and women gained perspectives on their lives and actions. In an era of increasing print consumption, opportunities grew for comparisons between worlds read of in books and one's own frame of reference. Readers understood internal processes of intellect, emotion and spirituality in relation to print consumption, while they maintained external systems of sociability, economics and work through readership. Readers authored these interplays in the pages of their diaries, as they managed daily trials and celebrated long-term successes. Robert Darnton has argued that readers in the period used their books in order to 'cope with life'.<sup>43</sup> I argue that reading and diary-keeping together acted as daily and long-term coping mechanisms. In all, a study of the reading of authors through an analysis of diary-writing, itself a form of authorship, creates an interesting framework for considering wider notions of reader, writer and the self.

### **Reading: Historiography, Theory and Methodology**

Historiography on the subject of eighteenth-century reading contains a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches to the field. Richard Altick's 1957 book, *The English Common Reader*, was a pioneering study in the field of book history.<sup>44</sup> It presented an outline for future investigations into the history of the book, with its focus on publishing firms, library catalogues and

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century. D. Wahrman, *The making of the modern self: identity and culture in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Smyth, *Autobiography*, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> R. Darnton, *The great cat massacre: and other episodes in French cultural history* (London, 2001), p. 241.

<sup>44</sup> Altick, *Reader*.

borrowing records, literacy rates and book ownership. Since this publication, book history has advanced and evolved as scholars have analysed all stages of a book's life-cycle, the 'communications circuit' identified by Robert Darnton.<sup>45</sup> This cycle involves transmission from the author to the publisher, the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. The reader completes the circuit, by ultimately influencing authors, who are readers themselves.<sup>46</sup> With its diversity of approaches, including studies of production, distribution and consumption, the 'history of the book' has emerged in the last forty years as a distinct branch of enquiry, combining bibliography, social history, literary criticism and cultural theory. The field investigates all aspects of textual creation and reception, constructing 'a geography of knowledge, as it describes and analyses the technologies, institutions, locales and substantive practices that ultimately lead to the worldly exchanges between the reader and the printed page'.<sup>47</sup>

While book history is broad in its scope, Darnton has noted the tendency of scholars to specialise in one aspect of this cycle, such as publishing through the study of bibliography, for example.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, there seems to be divisions between those who study the book as an object, an artefact in its own right, and those who study its reception by readers. The history of the book as an object aligns with studies of material culture. One of the editors of the *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1695-1830* (2009), Michael F. Suarez, writes that the volume is about the worldliness of print in Britain. Suarez cites Edward Said who has

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<sup>45</sup> R. Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus*, 111, (Summer, 1982), pp. 65-83, p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> Darnton, 'Books', p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> Suarez, 'Introduction', Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 1-35, at p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> John Feather has covered these aspects of book history in, *The provincial book trade in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1985) and *A history of British publishing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Abingdon, 2006). These works consider the state of the trade as well as notions of the professional and authorial agency. They are narrative accounts following the developments of the print trades, including how legal changes affected the industry, as well as how traders and producers negotiated the trends and fluctuations of the publishing market.

observed that too much textual theory and practice has 'isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work'.<sup>49</sup> Historians have derived most knowledge about the past from texts, but before the emergence of book history, texts were not studied for their materiality necessarily or as historical objects. Since the 1970s, journals devoted to book history, the publication of *The Cambridge History of the Book* and the growth of centres for book history, have institutionalised and expanded on how we can study text from the past as an object.<sup>50</sup> The creation of the *English Short-Title Catalogue* (ESTC) has been particularly critical for this development, especially in the field of bibliography. The creation of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) in the early 1990s has been similarly significant.

While this scholarship has come up with useful new knowledge about the story of print culture in the past, some historians have classed the production and publishing aspect of book history as the 'old book history', with its focus on who owned or borrowed books, who produced books, and how books were published, printed and circulated. Consumption and reception-focused scholars look to a 'new' book history, which emphasises the act of reading itself.<sup>51</sup> The history of reading attempts to answer how and why people read; it seeks to create a 'history of the reader'. James Raven's helpful 1998 article 'New reading

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<sup>49</sup> E. Said, *The world, the text, and the critic* (London, 1991), p. 4, as quoted by Suarez, 'Introduction', p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> For studies of eighteenth-century print culture, the massive, almost 900-page edition of *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain, 1695-1830* (2009) is the most comprehensive. It includes sections on the quantity and nature of printed matter, economic, legal and cultural contexts, technology, markets and readership. It is particularly detailed and extensive in its coverage of printing and publishing practice.

<sup>51</sup> J. Rose, 'Rereading the English common reader: a preface to a history of audiences', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53 (Jan.-Mar., 1992), pp. 47-70, p. 47. See also, L. Howsam, 'Victorian studies and the history of the book: opportunities for scholarly collaboration', *Victorian Review*, 22, (Summer, 1996), pp. 65-70; C. N. Davidson, 'Towards a history of books and readers', *American Quarterly*, 40, (Mar., 1988), pp. 7-17; D. S. Miall, 'Empirical approaches to studying literary readers: the state of the discipline', *Book History*, 9 (2006), pp. 291-311.

histories, print culture and the identification of change: the case of eighteenth-century England' stresses the importance of examining readers' responses to texts, rather than simply the processes of publication.<sup>52</sup> He writes that, 'emphasis upon print and 'the book' threatens to isolate their study from a broader cultural history in which communication operated at multiple levels and in which the relationship between text and audience was often influenced by other modes of social interaction'.<sup>53</sup> Raven's article explores methods and sources through which we can investigate readership, particularly promoting the combination of first-hand accounts of reading experiences in letters and diaries, along with some documentation on print circulation and creation, with an awareness of the material aspects of print and technological circumstances of publishing. Historians must place the ultimate importance on the reading experience, guided by the premise that a text is given meaning when it is read.

The history of reading has evolved significantly through the development of post-structuralism in the 1960s and 1970s, influenced in particular by the work of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. The radical theory of 'deconstruction' asserted that all meaning was provided by the reader, proclaiming the 'death of the author'.<sup>54</sup> A modification of this bold assertion was 'reader-response theory' as proposed by Wolfgang Iser in *The Act of Reading* (1978). Iser was interested in the interactions between readers and texts and, although readers constructed meaning, he identified the concept of the 'implied reader', inherent in all texts awaiting realisation by the reader.<sup>55</sup> Closely related, and influenced by the work of Hans Robert Jauss at the University of Konstanz, 'reception theory' focussed on the ways readers actually

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<sup>52</sup> J. Raven, 'New reading histories, print culture and the identification of change: the case of eighteenth-century England', *Social History*, 23 (Oct., 1998), pp. 268-287.

<sup>53</sup> Raven, 'Reading', p. 268.

<sup>54</sup> R. Barthes, trans. by S. Heath, *Image-music-text* (London, 1977), pp. 142-148.

<sup>55</sup> Allan, *Commonplace*, p. 7.

experience texts. It sought to unpack the ‘network of assumptions’ with which a reader approaches and understands texts, and was thus much more sensitive to social and cultural historical influences. Reception theory aimed to restore history to the centre of literary studies.<sup>56</sup> The field has obvious affinities to New Historicism, the most important movement in American literary criticism recently, which understands that reading and writing always have a historical and social context.

Reception study is the theoretical framework within which this project is secured. While reception study generally rejects the belief that texts have an intrinsic transformative power, the field ranges from modernist approaches that recognise some transcendent influence of great texts to ultra postmodern theories that reject any such influence. The postmodern turn in reception study focuses more on ‘local histories’ as well as gender, history of the book, race and multiculturalism.<sup>57</sup> This thesis addresses readers’ experiences as aspects of a specific historical context as well. Readers interpreted books in relation to a contemporary, social and cultural moment. However, this thesis does find that the readers studied shared certain types of reactions to books over the 135-year period, suggesting a universal, philosophical ideal, the notion rejected by the more postmodern theorists in the field of reception studies. These continuities related to emotional response as well as intellectualism. Whilst emotions expressed by readers were not identical, reoccurring themes of boredom, joy, sadness, studiousness and ideological self-improvement repeated throughout the long period. Reading was situated within historical parameters, particularly its material manifestations. However, readers’ similar emotional and intellectual reactions suggest some degree of universality within the process of reading.

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<sup>56</sup> R. C. Holub, *Reception theory: a critical introduction* (London, 1984), p. 53.

<sup>57</sup> J. L. Machor and P. Goldstein, eds., *Reception study: from literary theory to cultural studies* (London, 2001), p. xiii.

The study of cultural history has been fundamental to the development of reading history. ‘Discussions concerning “culture” and cultural history need to include the relations between description and creation, between historical analysis and narrative exposition, between science and art. Without conflating fiction and truth, they need not only to question the relation between language and truth but also the question of truth and text.’<sup>58</sup> Conceptualising sources as ‘texts’ has become critical to understanding culture in the past. Historical interpretation is determined by the ‘reading’ of texts, in this case the reading of diaries and letters. At the same time, historical texts, such as the books studied here, were read in specific ways by historical actors operating in a distinctive cultural sphere that was shaped by reading, while simultaneously influencing reading.

In 2001, Darnton elaborated on the establishment of a history of reading, identifying two common approaches: the macro- and the microanalytical.<sup>59</sup> The macroanalytical approach has been employed by French historians, through the investigation of long-term book-borrowing trends, as well as book-purchasing habits. Statistical compilations have revealed patterns such as ‘the decline of Latin, the rise of the novel, the general fascination with the immediate world of nature and the remote worlds of exotic countries’.<sup>60</sup> A few historians have suggested a model of a ‘reading revolution’, which saw a change before and after 1750 from reading ‘intensively’ from a few books, read repeatedly, often aloud, to reading ‘extensively’ from all kinds of material, especially periodicals and newspapers, with each item only being read once. Rolf Engelsing and David Hall have found

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<sup>58</sup> R. Chartier, ‘Text, symbols and Frenchness’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 57 (Dec., 1985), p. 682-695, p. 690, as referenced by B.C. Sax, ‘Truth and meaning in cultural history’, in P.S. Gold and B.C. Sax, eds., *Cultural visions: essays in the history of culture* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 3-24, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> R. Darnton, ‘First steps toward a history of reading’, in J. L. Machor and P. Goldstein, eds., *Reception study: from literary theory to cultural studies* (London, 2001), pp. 160-179, p. 162.

<sup>60</sup> Darnton, ‘History of reading’, p. 162.

this trend in their histories of reading in Europe and America respectively.<sup>61</sup> Countering this assertion of a sudden split mid-century, this thesis reveals these two modes of reading existing simultaneously in the eighteenth century.

While the macroanalytical approach can provide answers to 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'when' questions of readership (perhaps similar to the 'old book history'), the 'whys' and 'hows' remain elusive. To uncover these latter two, Darnton suggests five tactics: 1) learning about ideals and assumptions underlying reading in the past, 2) studying the ways reading was learned, 3) analysing autobiographical case studies, 4) investigating literary theory and 5) incorporating analytical bibliography.<sup>62</sup> This thesis follows the microanalytical approach, employing all five strategies to varying degrees. Like Raven's, Darnton's proposal of case study analysis will be followed up in this project, which is placed firmly within historiography of book history, specifically studies that seek to find a history of the reader. It will also take into account some post-structuralist theory mentioned above, as well as follow Roger Chartier's remit, based on Michel de Certeau's assertion, that texts are dependent on readers for their meanings.<sup>63</sup> This work does not ignore the materiality of print, as it will also consider readers' encounters with objects in specific environments. It seeks to establish an experience of reading, a 'reading life'. Chartier poses that 'the task of the historian is...to reconstruct the variations that differentiate the "readable space" (the texts in their material and discursive forms) and those which govern the circumstances of their "actualization" (the readings seen as

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<sup>61</sup> Darnton, 'History of reading', p. 166. See also, R. Engelsing, 'Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit. Das statistische Ausmass und die soziokulturelle Bedeutung der Lektüre,' *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 10 (1969), pp. 944-1002 and Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser. Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500-1800* (Stuttgart, 1974). Also, D. Hall, 'The uses of literacy in New England, 1600-1850', in W.L. Joyce, D.D. Hall, and R.D. Brown, eds., *Printing and society in early America* (Worcester, 1983), pp. 1-47.

<sup>62</sup> Darnton, 'History of reading', pp. 169-176.

<sup>63</sup> See M. de Certeau, trans. by S.F. Rendall, *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley, 1984).

concrete practices and interpretive procedures)',<sup>64</sup> Through a series of case-studies of men and women readers, in addition to a thematic chapter on prescriptions for the 'ideal reader' (Darnton's first tactic), this thesis creates a new study of 'reading lives' in the eighteenth century. The study is supported by the arguments made by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton about the 'activity of reading', which was always goal-orientated and tended to give rise to something else.<sup>65</sup> In all case studies examined here, reading did lead to 'something else', especially the enabling of self-improvement and the negotiation of gender norms, within contemporary cultural frameworks of education, civility and religion.

Historians have carried out similar investigations in recent decades, as pointed out by Darnton.<sup>66</sup> However, this thesis will expand current scholarship by incorporating the too-often overlooked question of gender as it relates to reading practice. In the eighteenth century, one's gender affected major aspects of his or her reading culture, from ideas of acceptable reading practice, to literacy rates, to reading spaces and routine. The most recent comprehensive work on book history is a perfect example of how book historians ignore gender questions in major works on print culture. *The Cambridge History of the Book* devotes one single essay to 'Women and print: readers, writers and the market'.<sup>67</sup> The editors crush the huge field of study into print's effect on women's lives in the eighteenth century into 13 pages. Furthermore, investigations into femininity or masculinity in regard to print is absent from the book completely. It is this lack of a gender framework within major studies of book history that this thesis seeks to address.

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<sup>64</sup> R. Chartier and J.A. González, 'Laborers and voyages: from the text to the reader', *Diacritics*, 22 (Summer, 1992), pp. 49-61, p. 50.

<sup>65</sup> L. Jardine and A. Grafton, "'Studied for action": how Gabriel Harvey read his Livy', *Past and Present*, 129, (Nov., 1990), pp. 30-78.

<sup>66</sup> Jardine and Grafton, 'Studied for action'.

<sup>67</sup> I. Grundy, 'Women and print: readers, writers and the market', in Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 146-159.



Jacqueline Pearson has argued for the feminisation of the reading public in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, noting the anxieties that went along with the increase of women as readers and writers.<sup>68</sup> Pearson focuses on practice and perceptions. She combines studies of figurative women readers in literature with those of historical women readers to investigate where and how women and girls should read, what they should read, how commentators considered reading dangerous and how male authors viewed women readers. This work is useful because it addresses cultural attitudes toward women's reading, which historians had hitherto not considered. The chapter on prescribed reading for women is particularly interesting for its consideration of genre as a determinant of acceptability. Furthermore, Pearson's study of libraries as potential gendered spaces contains insight into how men and women used the private library and the circulating library differently.

Nevertheless, Pearson's overall focus on restriction in conduct literature overlooks reading realities for women who did not behave according to prescriptions. The purpose of this thesis is to show how books could provide freedom and empowerment to literate women. Pearson deals with literary readers within texts, alongside historical readers, which blurs the distinction between an imagined reading public and the reality. This thesis offers a single, distinct contextual chapter of prescriptions for reading, while mainly focusing on actual readers in the five other case study chapters. In order to address gender fully, the project contains two chapters on men and three on women readers. Unlike Pearson's study, it does not start from the theoretical assumption of domestic confinement for women.

An obvious aspect of readership and gender is the question of literacy within the population. While historians dispute models for determining literacy, David Cressy has found that, based on

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<sup>68</sup> Pearson, *Women's reading*, p. 15.

signatures in marriage registers, literacy rates in England at the time of Queen Anne's death were approximately 45 per cent for men and 25 per cent for women.<sup>69</sup> Literacy rates rose throughout the century, and R.S. Schofield's work on marriage registers has indicated that male literacy was about 60 per cent until the 1790s, rising to 66 per cent in 1830. About 40 percent of women had reading skills at mid-eighteenth century, rising to 50 per cent in 1830.<sup>70</sup> However, historians have questioned the methodology for determining these statistics. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly have edited a collection of essays that explores readership and literacy. It addresses the controversy over measuring literacy, particularly 'signature literacy'.

The standard measure which equates a signature with literacy and a mark on a public document with its absence, does not begin to reveal the extent of women's literacy not only because these measures conflate reading and writing but also because they conflate reading and signing in public. As scholars have demonstrated, a woman who wrote a good italic hand in private might well choose to witness a legal document with an X.<sup>71</sup>

Adding to the controversy, Raven has disputed the idea that 'literacy' is the polar opposite of 'illiteracy', suggesting that we should consider 'literacies', and different modes of reading or misreading.<sup>72</sup> The concept of literacy is crucial for this project, which deals with responses to text. How one read something was very much determined by her own understanding of what she was

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<sup>69</sup> D. Cressy, *Literacy and the social order: reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 176.

<sup>70</sup> R.S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of illiteracy, 1750-1850', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10 (1973) pp. 437-54, pp. 445-446.

<sup>71</sup> H.B. Hackel and C.E. Kelly, eds., *Reading women: literacy, authorship, and culture in the Atlantic world, 1500-1800* (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Raven, 'Reading', p. 285.

doing, what she wanted to get from the text, and how much she believed she had achieved this goal.

Susan Whyman has contributed to the debate on literacy significantly. She argues that ‘epistolary literacy’, which can be studied through readers’ and writers’ letter-writing activities, reveals a greater degree of literacy further down the social ladder than has been explored previously.<sup>73</sup> She points out the paradox that in the period of the postal service’s great growth from 1750-1840, studies have shown that literacy was stagnating.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, historians have insisted that popular literacy did not increase significantly until the growth of state schooling in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup> Whyman’s goal is to show the degree to which popular literacy increased in the eighteenth century through letter-writing, a development not addressed fully by historians.

Contemporary debates surrounding the morality or acceptability of reading, by women in particular, inspire disagreement among historians of the eighteenth century. As mentioned, Pearson has worked on genre and found that any reading by women, regardless of genre, could stir up controversy among commentators.<sup>76</sup> She finds an element of defiance in women reading, asserting that, ‘almost all genres, however apparently harmless, could be read rebelliously and resistingly rather than compliantly’.<sup>77</sup> Concerning novels, Peter H. Pawlowicz has identified a fear of imitation. Critics thought that young women might act upon emotions and sensations read about in books and behave incorrectly, without having had the appropriate experience or grounding. Pawlowicz reads this conflict as one in which ‘reading defined an important site of opposition’ in a society

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<sup>73</sup> Whyman, *Pen*, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Whyman, *Pen*, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Whyman, *Pen*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Pearson, *Women’s reading*.

<sup>77</sup> Pearson, *Women’s reading*, p. 43.

that demanded 'a high degree of conformity in women'.<sup>78</sup> Reading could be contentious for men, as well as women, as commentators applied the derisive term of pedant to the overly bookish, impolite man incapable of conversing correctly in society.<sup>79</sup> Too much display of one's reading could make one a bore in company. However, it was the 'learned lady' who was maligned more than her male counterparts.<sup>80</sup>

While some historians have focussed on arguments of reading as rebellion or reading as impolite, others find reading to be a fact of daily life. In response to Alice Clark and Lawrence Stone, who famously claimed that women in the eighteenth century became 'idle drones' engaged in frivolous past-times such as novel-reading and card-playing,<sup>81</sup> Naomi Tadmor's work on the practice of reading has found that it was not 'connected to idleness, listlessness or frivolity but to a routine of work and of religious discipline'.<sup>82</sup> There also seems to be a reoccurring debate within scholarship on women's reading about inclusion in or exclusion from the literary sphere. Kathryn Shevelow's work on print culture and femininity, entitled *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (1989), finds that women's inclusion in the rapidly expanding print culture of the eighteenth century, 'had mixed consequences for their representation in and by writing. For many of the very agents that were enabling, even actively promoting, women's participation in print culture were also those engaged in containing it'.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> P. H. Pawlowicz, 'Reading women: text and image in eighteenth-century England', in

A. Bermingham and J. Brewer, eds., *The consumption of culture 1600-1800: image, object, text* (London, 1995), pp. 42-53, p. 45.

<sup>79</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter and Occupational Reader chapter.

<sup>80</sup> In the last decades of the eighteenth century, highly educated females were in danger of being labelled as female pedants. Bluestockings, by the turn of the century, were likely targets of this criticism. See Ideal Reader, Bluestocking Reader and Romantic Reader chapters.

<sup>81</sup> See A. Clark, *Working life of women in the seventeenth century* (London, 1919) and L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 396-7.

<sup>82</sup> Tadmor, 'Reading', p. 165.

<sup>83</sup> Shevelow, *Femininity*.

Shevelow's model of inclusion, but restriction, is relevant in the discussion of print history because it examines representations of women in a medium that addressed their position in society directly. The conduct aspect of the periodical's purpose is emphasised as she identifies a shift from 'reform-as-knowledge to reform-as-behaviour-modification'.<sup>84</sup> The change was from education to control.

Nevertheless, while Shevelow's contribution is extremely interesting to historians of femininity and print, the idea that print enabled while it contained women as writers and textual figures is misleading. Indeed, other scholars, such as Tadmor, have repeatedly shown how women were not restricted through print, but indeed empowered and included in a wider sphere of public debate. Amanda Vickery has emphasised this latter point in her pioneering work, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (1998), finding that, among the gentility, women had 'unprecedented access' to print in this period, and were exposed 'to the rhetorical nuts and bolts of public debate'.<sup>85</sup> Kathryn Gleadle's research on rational dissenters in the late eighteenth century shows how women read and disseminated Enlightenment texts to enrich their participation in political discussion.<sup>86</sup> In a study of American women from 1750 to 1900, Caroline Winterer has analysed the classical tradition and its influence on female reading in the colonies, emphasising textual consumption as a means to involvement in political conversation and aesthetics.<sup>87</sup> Additional studies on the bluestockings as well as the Enlightenment add further evidence to the argument that print and reading could enable participation in literary discussion

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<sup>84</sup> Shevelow, *Femininity*, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), p. 259.

<sup>86</sup> K. Gleadle, 'British women and radical politics in the late nonconformist Enlightenment, 1780-1830', in A. Vickery, ed., *Women, privilege and power: British politics, 1750 to the present* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 123-151.

<sup>87</sup> C. Winterer, *The mirror of antiquity: American women and the classical tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca, 2007).

within the public sphere.<sup>88</sup> This thesis expands upon these arguments, asserting that reading was indeed a source of intellectual empowerment for women, rather than a site of struggle against oppressive domestic confinement.

The research in this thesis will broaden our understanding of women and men's roles within the rapidly expanding world of print in the eighteenth century. It follows the lead of historians like Paula McDowell who have considered women outside the limited notions of author or reader, and placed them in the history of production and consumption of text.<sup>89</sup> I hope to conceptualise women and men as actors in the literary marketplace, with an emphasis on the reception of print. Brean S. Hammond has written a very helpful work in this direction entitled, *Professional Imaginative Writing in England, 1670-1740, 'Hackney for Bread'* (1997). Hammond investigates how 'the discourse that later came to be known as "literature" was shaped by the imperatives of making a living in the period after the Civil War'.<sup>90</sup> He notes that it was during the hundred years following the Civil War that 'imaginative writing' became a widely consumed commodity, that literacy improved considerably, that newspapers and periodicals developed as distinct forms, that arguments about the notion of 'wit' as intellectual property emerged and that women entered the literary workplace as consumers and producers.<sup>91</sup> My study of men and women's reading practices will conceptualise print consumption as an aspect of a growing market for books within the eighteenth century. I will not investigate rates of book-selling directly, but I will pay attention to personal accounts of how and where readers obtained and consumed books.

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<sup>88</sup> See N. Pohl and B. Schellenberg, eds., *Reconsidering the bluestockings* (San Marino, 2003) and Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*.

<sup>89</sup> P. McDowell, *The women of Grub Street: press, politics, and gender in the London literary marketplace 1678-1730* (London, 1998).

<sup>90</sup> B. S. Hammond, *Professional imaginative writing in England, 1670-1740, 'Hackney for bread'* (Oxford, 1997), p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Hammond, *Writing*, p. 5.

Conceptualising women and men as consumers of print within a marketplace, theories regarding 'the object' and the materiality of printed material will be considered. The physical form of books remains integral to the question of readership. For example, Darnton and Chartier have analysed the way in which the typographical layout of text could influence a reader's reception of a piece of print.<sup>92</sup> Chartier, in his modification of De Certeau's work, has stated that 'readers, in fact, never confront abstract, idealized texts detached from any materiality'.<sup>93</sup> While this project is primarily concerned with the act of reading itself, it cannot ignore the book as an object or the temporal and spatial influences on its reception. This point is critical to my methodology. Though I will not be analysing physical attributes of books (that would take the project beyond its constraints as a single doctoral thesis), the accounts of books as material goods within the case studies will be explored. Relevant historiography in this respect includes *The Cambridge History of the Book*, with its essays on the aesthetics of book production, illustrations and the morphology of the page. Leah Price's work, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (2000), is similarly illuminating. Price challenges established theories about the 'rise of the novel' by examining the production of anthologies.<sup>94</sup> Importantly she concludes that the process of 'skimming' while reading was like abridging and the process of 'skipping' was like anthologising.

## **Print Culture in the Eighteenth Century**

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<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Darnton, 'Readers respond to Rousseau', in *Cat massacre*, pp. 215-256; R. Chartier, trans. by L.G. Cochrane, *The cultural uses of print in early modern Europe*, (Princeton, 1987).

<sup>93</sup> Chartier and González, 'Reader', p. 50. See also, De Certeau, trans. by Rendall, *Practice*.

<sup>94</sup> L. Price, *The anthology and the rise of the novel: from Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge, 2000). I. Watt's famous book, *The rise of the novel* (London, 1957) was an influential work of literary history, said to have institutionalised the study of the novel. However, his argument that the novel rose along with the middle-classes has been heavily criticised and is now outdated.

Recognition of the materiality of books is necessary for exploring the textual format with which readers engaged. The history of the book in the eighteenth century reveals important developments in generic publishing, the creation of new print forms, and a new gendering of print. Conduct literature, housewifery and cookery, satire, miscellanies, almanacs, children's educational books, novels, devotionals, political tracts, biography, travels, periodicals, newspapers, hymns, sermons, music, maps, charts, atlases, law books, philosophical books, scientific and medical books, as well as books on the classics, poetry and history comprised most eighteenth-century publishing. These categories are not absolute, and their rates of publication not equal. Suarez has come up with eleven separate genres for the century, based on his study of data in the ESTC, collected between 2002 and 2004.<sup>95</sup> He finds that the most important category was 'religion, philosophy and ethics', though there was a downward trend in publication rates throughout the century. 'Politics, government and law', on the other hand, remained the most consistent category in terms of publication numbers. While this was famously the era of the 'rise of the novel', fiction, at its height, represented only 3.5 per cent of all surviving titles.<sup>96</sup> Of course, these statistics are problematic because the creators of the ESTC did not design it to be a statistical tool. Furthermore, it is difficult to know whether readers would have recognised these genres at the time of publication.<sup>97</sup> Still, a consideration of genre is necessary in the analysis of gender and reading. Two important myths to dispel are the assumption that novel reading was a female pasttime solely,

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<sup>95</sup> Suarez, 'Towards a bibliometric analysis of the surviving record', in Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 39-65.

<sup>96</sup> Suarez, 'Bibliometric', pp. 46-48.

<sup>97</sup> Suarez does state that his intention is to make genres that would have been relevant to the 'common reader' as well as booksellers of the day. Suarez, 'Bibliometric', pp. 45-46.



and that most books read and circulated were novels.<sup>98</sup> These themes in the historiography mimic eighteenth-century commentary rather than historical fact. The project will seek to ascertain a more accurate understanding of genre's relationship to gender in reading choice, opportunity and social expectations.

Besides developments in book genre, the improvement of the road network and its use by the Post Office meant that mail carriers could deliver more printed material throughout the country to shops, libraries and private collectors. Serial publication was beginning to take shape in the 1690s. The communications infrastructure, along with the rise in literacy, made the production and distribution of news increasingly possible. Serial production also fostered the development of the periodical. With content centred on culture and arts, rather than news, the periodical was influential in its claim to be an arbiter of good taste and politeness. John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* published from 1690 to 1697 was the early model, followed by Richard Steele's *Tatler* in 1709, and Steele and Joseph Addison's, *Spectator* from 1711 to 1714. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* continued to be reprinted and widely read throughout the century and beyond. Later periodicals, such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1907), the *Monthly Review* (1749-1844) and the *Critical Review* (1756-1817) were also popular. The *Female Spectator* in the 1740s by Eliza Haywood was the first periodical for women, followed by the *Lady's Magazine* from 1770.

Publications for women were part of a development of gendering in some books and print, particularly within conduct literature aimed at men or women separately. Conduct books advised on politeness and decorum. Book historians have not

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<sup>98</sup> J. Fergus has proven that in the provinces from 1740s, men were the primary customers for new novels—including novels written by women. Fergus has looked at archival records from Midland booksellers for five market towns. These booksellers served 3,300 customers from 1744-1807. Fergus, *Readers*, p. 237. Unfortunately, this does not take into account the fact that men were the primary customers for most goods.

explored the range and proliferation of literary categories for gendered markets in the eighteenth century. Isobel Grundy suggests that women owned more female-authored books than men did, but does not elaborate on whether these were books written by women as well as *for* women.<sup>99</sup> A survey of 200 books written for women offers some tentative conclusions about gendered publishing, particularly in regard to women's engagement in literary culture as well as consumption within the evolving print market.<sup>100</sup> More work is required in this direction, with studies on books for men as well. Again, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to be aware of the existence of books for men and books for women when considering the issue of readership and gender in the eighteenth century.

Within the question of readership, the explanation for why so much new material was on the market and suddenly available in this period is relevant. The manual printing press was still in use, and this technology would not improve significantly until the nineteenth century. Still, the increase in the production of smaller, duodecimo books made reading more portable. Furthermore, legislative changes brought about a great expansion of print material around the late seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century.

Legal changes that affected publication rates related to the fight for the protection of copyright by booksellers after the expiration of the Licensing Act of 1695. The act had controlled the number of master printers and apprentices, assured a London monopoly, and controlled copy ownership.<sup>101</sup> Under this system, a 'copy' secured by a stationer from the Stationers' Company, would last forever. Only members of the guild, booksellers and printers

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<sup>99</sup> Grundy, 'Readers', p. 154.

<sup>100</sup> P. Bull, 'Femininity and Print Culture in the Eighteenth Century', unpublished MA dissertation, Royal Holloway, 2008.

<sup>101</sup> J. Feather, *A history of British publishing* (London, 1988), p. 67.

(not authors), could own copies, and disputes about copy ownership were settled within the guild only.<sup>102</sup> Terry Belanger has estimated that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the book trade was controlled by fewer than 100 booksellers.<sup>103</sup>

London printers did not welcome the end of legal control of when the Licensing Act expired in 1695, but they did not lose their monopoly immediately. Booksellers petitioned parliament to have the Act renewed and did win the battle temporarily with a 1710 act called 'An Act for the Encouragement of Learning'.<sup>104</sup> Also known as the Statute of Anne, this legislation was the world's first copyright statute. It was modelled on the old system of copyright control. However, rather than a perpetual right to a copy, the act stated that copyright was a limited privilege for a specific term (21 years for books in print and 14 years for new books).<sup>105</sup> The statute also allowed authors—non-guild members—to own copyrights.<sup>106</sup> As Mark Rose has pointed out, the title of this statute, 'an act for the encouragement of learning', also suggests a transition away from an older culture of regulation imposed through licensing and the guild system, and a turn towards 'enlightenment' and Jürgen Habermas' 'public sphere' of newspapers, periodicals, coffee houses and public pleasure gardens.<sup>107</sup>

The Statute of Anne was a loosening of the traditional grip of the London booksellers, but they did not accept the change without a fight, appealing to the courts to rule in favour of perpetual copyrights. They won the battle temporarily with the

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<sup>102</sup> M. Rose, 'Copyright, authors and censorship', in Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 118-131, p. 118.

<sup>103</sup> T. Belanger, 'Publishers, and writers in eighteenth-century England', in I. Rivers, *Books and their readers in eighteenth-century England* (Leicester, 1982), pp. 5-25, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> Feather, *Publishing*, p. 55.

<sup>105</sup> Rose, 'Copyright', p. 119.

<sup>106</sup> Rose, 'Copyright', p. 119.

<sup>107</sup> Rose, 'Copyright', p. 119. Habermas argues in *The structural transformation of the public sphere* (Cambridge, 1989) that the eighteenth century witnessed the growth of a public space outside state control in which individuals exchanged ideas and knowledge. This was facilitated by the growth of institutions such as newspapers, journals, coffeehouses and reading clubs.

case *Millar v. Taylor*.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, cases of renegade printing, especially in the provinces and Scotland, hampered efforts to prevent piracy beyond the reach of London's regulatory controls. The decisive blow came with the case of *Donaldson v. Becket* in 1774 in the House of Lords, which ruled that perpetual copyrights did not exist, dismantling London booksellers' attempts to stop anyone else from printing works to which they had long owned the rights. In the printers' view, this case was a victory for the 'pirates' at the expense of copyright protection. The long-term result of legislative changes throughout the period, particularly since the 1690s expiration of the Licensing Act, was a huge increase in publication rates throughout the country and the rise of the professional author.<sup>109</sup>

With the decentralisation of the printing industry, publishing proliferated in London and in the provinces. The increase in literacy, as already mentioned, as well as enlightenment learning, the emphasis on rational thought and worldly understanding, combined with dramatic urban transformation made it a fertile time for the evolution of print culture. Broadly, historians have identified this period as the 'English urban renaissance' in which landscape, leisure and society were transformed.<sup>110</sup> The transformation included the expansion of readership. Books were increasingly available throughout all of Britain. An eager market of readers keenly pursued newspapers and periodicals. The means of production and sale of books grew and diversified, as did the venues available for reading and discussion. The commercial circulating libraries, usually developed by booksellers as additions to their businesses, were new centres of literary pursuit. Reading became public

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<sup>108</sup> Rose, 'Copyright', p. 122.

<sup>109</sup> Rose, 'Copyright', p.125.

<sup>110</sup> P. Borsay, *The English urban Renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989).

recreation.<sup>111</sup> New genres of literature, specifically the novel and periodicals, were increasingly popular and sometimes controversial.<sup>112</sup>

Whig historians have seen the expansion of print and growth of literacy in the eighteenth century as part of a story of progress in which larger numbers of the population were enlightened and liberated. They have argued that print and the ability to read were democratizing and an improvement on the restraints of the court and patronage. According to Habermas, the new public sphere would not have existed without a culture of readers adequately informed to create a check on the ruling powers.<sup>113</sup> Raven, however, has warned against this interpretation and suggested that reading was not always liberating, and could have been imprisoning.<sup>114</sup> While this may have been true in circumstances where readers had little choice, the case studies explored here suggest that middling and gentry readers were empowered by their books, especially when they read 'for action', with specific goals in mind. Even readers with more limited print choices could engage with books to get the best possible result through textual interaction.

Key to the developments in publishing history and the polite public sphere was the evolution of libraries both privately and publicly in the guise of circulating libraries. According to the historiography, two developments marked a 'feminisation' of reading space and accessibility. One of these was the increased influence of women on previously all male, exclusive book clubs and subscription libraries. Historians have judged these early forms of libraries as restrictive sites of male privilege. John Brewer and Jacqueline Pearson have both noted the exclusionary nature

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<sup>111</sup> Borsay, *Renaissance*, p. 134.

<sup>112</sup> P. Langford, *A polite and commercial people: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989), p. 95.

<sup>113</sup> See the application of the public sphere to English culture in J. Brewer, *The pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (New York, 1997).

<sup>114</sup> Raven, 'Reading', p. 286.

of such institutions.<sup>115</sup> James Raven has also studied these groups' concern with maintaining an exclusive sociability and intellectual hierarchy separate from non-members, particularly women.<sup>116</sup> However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, an increase in female influence on the subscription library had taken place, as collections increasingly began to reflect the interests of women readers.<sup>117</sup> This was not always due to an increase in female subscribers, but rather the growing influence of female family members, voiced through the mouthpieces of their male relatives. David Allan has shown that, while women may not have been formal subscribers in as high numbers as men, they still had access to books through their husbands or brothers. Sisters, wives, and daughters could have enjoyed similar privileges as an extension of a man's formal subscription.<sup>118</sup> Allan has found cases in which libraries held books for women after their husbands' deaths, for example. Meanwhile, book clubs, which, like subscription libraries had often begun as male groups, increasingly included female members. Some book clubs formed as places solely for women, such as The Penzance Ladies' Book Club, for example. Thus, the first development in the feminisation of library institutions by the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was the increased influence and sometimes membership of women in book clubs and subscription libraries.

The second development in the increased access for women within reading spaces and communities by the late eighteenth century was the growth of circulating libraries. These were often for-profit institutions instigated as a business by one individual. Whereas book clubs and subscription libraries operated more as collaborative ventures in which books, relatively expensive goods,

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<sup>115</sup> See Pearson, *Women's reading*, p. 162 and Brewer, *English culture*, p. 180.

<sup>116</sup> J. Raven, 'Libraries for sociability: the advance of the subscription library', in G. Mandelbrote and K.A. Manley, eds., *The Cambridge history of libraries in Britain and Ireland, vol. II 1640-1850* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 241-263, p. 254.

<sup>117</sup> Raven, 'Libraries', p. 254.

<sup>118</sup> D. Allan, *A nation of readers: the lending library in Georgian England* (London: 2008), p. 82.

could be purchased and shared through membership fees, the circulating libraries aimed to profit from the loaning out of books to rate-paying library members.<sup>119</sup> Circulating libraries often developed as extensions to pre-existing shops such as booksellers, stationers and medicine dispensaries. Historians have shown that some circulating libraries specialised in novels specifically, and in general, the historiography has found that these institutions tended to house more novels than the subscription libraries.<sup>120</sup> The association of women and novels thus comes to bear in the debate on the feminisation of libraries by the late eighteenth century.

Besides community book groups, subscription libraries, parish libraries and circulating libraries, private libraries were another source of books for eighteenth-century readers.<sup>121</sup> Mark Girouard has shown that it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that rooms called libraries in country houses became common, but they were still rare enough for visitors to take notice.<sup>122</sup> Late seventeenth-century libraries (like Pepys's as it was in 1690) were essentially studies. However, by the eighteenth century, the library 'had become an everyday part of upper-class life. The library and its contents were no longer the personal equipment of the owner of the house; they had become the common property of the family and his guests...the library began to be used as a living room'.<sup>123</sup> Thus, it was a social space where reading took place along with other indoor activities. This was the situation of the private house library. At the same time, there were

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<sup>119</sup> Free public libraries did not develop until the late nineteenth century, though parish and religious libraries in the eighteenth century were early forms of 'popular' reading institutions. See Allan, *Readers*.

<sup>120</sup> See K. Sutherland, 'British Literature, 1774-1830' in Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 667-683.

<sup>121</sup> Frequent book purchase was only possible for the wealthier members of society as, throughout the period, books remained luxury items. Most books were purchased by men who had more money than women, though this thesis reveals wealthy women buying books, as well as lower middling men who engaged in book trading and auctioning.

<sup>122</sup> M. Girouard, *Life in the English country house: a social and architectural history* (London, 1978), p. 169.

<sup>123</sup> Girouard, *Country house*, p. 108.

changes, outlined above, in the way men and women circulated books beyond private purchase and consumption within the household. These changes included gendered dimensions in the development of what readers would come to know as the 'public' library by the late nineteenth century.

### **Gender: Historiography, Theory and Methodology**

Besides the history of the book, and the history of the reader specifically, this thesis engages with historiography on women's lives and gender. The expansion of women's history in the 1970s and 1980s has influenced eighteenth-century studies significantly. While these decades and those following saw the largest evolution and institutionalisation of women's history in universities, work on women's history had begun much earlier. Most notably, Alice Clark and Ivy Pinchbeck laid the foundation for the field in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>124</sup> More recently, historians of women's history have used sociological approaches, particularly those of Habermas, to consider women's history in terms of dichotomies such as 'public' and 'private'. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have argued in *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (1987) that men and women lived in 'separate spheres', a defining factor of the English middle class as it developed in the nineteenth century. The private sphere existed within the domestic home, while the public sphere existed in the world of formal power controlled by men. Here we find Kathryn Shevelow's confined femininity, trapped by print culture.<sup>125</sup> This paradigm of the female sphere has been scrutinised, however, particularly by Amanda Vickery who has rejected the model of separate

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<sup>124</sup> See Clark, *Women* and I. Pinchbeck, *Women workers of the industrial revolution, 1750-1850* (London, 1930).

<sup>125</sup> For a more nuanced view of femininity as it was conceived within Enlightenment ideology, see M.C. Moran, 'Between the savage and the civil: Dr John Gregory's natural history of femininity', in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 8-29.



spheres.<sup>126</sup> This thesis aims to provide a re-evaluation of women's history that considers the long view, while also taking on detailed case studies of real women's lives in the past, with a special sensitivity to women's own manuscripts.<sup>127</sup>

The most significant transformation in women's history recently has been its alteration by an emerging gender history. Gender history, like book history, is influenced by post-structuralism that seeks to understand the role of language in the creation of meaning, specifically related to 'gender' as a concept that includes men and women. Gender history claims that, in order to understand women in the past, one must also study men. We define men and women in relation to one another. Natalie Zemon Davis wrote that 'we should be interested in the history of both women and men, that we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than an historian of class can focus entirely on peasants. Our goal is to understand the significance of the sexes, of gender groups in the historical past'.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, along with class and race, gender could be a new category of analysis useful for understanding differentials of power in the past.

Women's historians have met this advent of gender history with mixed reactions. While some have seized upon gender history as a revolutionary and beneficial restructuring, others have been more cautious. For example, Joan W. Scott has noted that some early feminist historians held great expectations that, 'however hesitant the actual beginnings, such a methodology implies not only a new history of women, but also a new history'.<sup>129</sup> Others

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<sup>126</sup> A. Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *Historical Journal*, 36, (1993), pp. 383-414.

<sup>127</sup> Vickery, 'Women's history', pp. 413-414.

<sup>128</sup> N.Z. Davis, 'Women's history in transition: the European case,' *Feminist Studies*, 3 (Winter 1975-76), pp. 83-103, p. 90, as quoted in J. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis,' *American Historical Review*, 91, (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075, p. 1054.

<sup>129</sup> A.D. Gordon, M.J. Buhle, N.S. Dye, 'The problem of women's history', in B. Carroll, ed., *Liberating women's history* (Urbana, 1976), pp. 51-64, p. 61. As quoted by Scott, 'Gender', p. 1054.

have questioned the possibility of an entirely new history, however. Penelope Corfield has argued that gender history has not brought about 'a conceptual recasting of history', though it has certainly enriched the discipline. It has also not entailed the need for a new 'discourse', meaning gender historians can operate and communicate within and along the same lines as other historians.<sup>130</sup> More pessimistically, some feminist and Marxist historians have feared that the new field of gender history might slow the progress made in the drive to establish women's history as a legitimate branch of history. The new focus on 'gender' could shift the spotlight away from the study of women, and shine it back on men, once again positioning them as the headlining act in the drama of the past.

Despite these hesitations and despite the jubilant banner waving, women's history has not been subsumed into a familiar, male discourse by gender history and its evolution has not transformed all history as we know it. The development of gender history has been a positive and reinforcing influence on the field of women's history.<sup>131</sup> It is not that women have been forgotten, but rather that a new focus on language and identity has allowed all historians to reconsider what gender means and how it can sharpen our focus on real people's lives in the past. It is more inclusive. It is also part of recent work on personal identity, such as race, sexuality, mental illness, the body, and nationality. Of course, historians have dealt with all of those aspects as forms of social construction, heavily influenced by postmodernism, most famously the work of Michel Foucault.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> P.J. Corfield, 'History and the challenge of gender history', *Rethinking History*, 1/3 (1997), pp. 241-258, p. 245.

<sup>131</sup> However, some historians have questioned the positive influence of gender history. T. Ditz has criticised revisionist histories of gender that overlook or downplay traditional hierarchies and power-differentials between men and women. See T. Ditz, 'Review: what's love got to do with it? The history of men, the history of gender in the 1990s', *Reviews in American History*, 28 (Jun., 2000), pp. 167-180.

<sup>132</sup> M. Foucault, *Madness and civilisation; a history of insanity in the age of reason* (New York, 1965); M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (New York, 1977); M. Foucault, *The history of sexuality* (New York, 1978).

Historical studies of gender and culture underpin this thesis. Helen Berry's research on gender and print culture within the *Athenian Mercury* deals with themes such as the body, courtship and sexual behaviour.<sup>133</sup> The discussion of the relationship between a reading public and anonymous authors of a late seventeenth-century printed text, in reference to gender, is relevant here. Historiography on education also bears heavily on this work, particularly that of Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin, et al, who have conceived of eighteenth-century education as a cultural practice, rather than a political, social, or purely instructive system.<sup>134</sup> The 'ideal reader' chapter engages with this framework, posing that education ideas were a fundamental aspect of cultural understandings of reading. Michèle Cohen's work on gender and the eighteenth-century curriculum, as well as domestic education, is equally relevant in the discussion of 'ideal reading'.<sup>135</sup>

New literature on the Enlightenment and feminism has been of considerable value to this project. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor's edited collection, *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (2005), contains many useful chapters exploring 'the gender dimension of Enlightenment thought and practice'.<sup>136</sup> This bears heavily on my project as Enlightenment culture influenced the reading lives studied here. Of particular interest is Karen O'Brien's work, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2009).<sup>137</sup> O'Brien includes women as participants within the British Enlightenment and successfully demonstrates how contemporary writing by women and men created a discourse of feminism that continued into the nineteenth century.

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<sup>133</sup> H. Berry, *Gender, society and print culture in Late-Stuart England: The cultural world of the Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>134</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter, p. 61; M. Hilton and J. Shefrin, eds., *Educating the child in Enlightenment Britain: beliefs, cultures and practices* (Farnham, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> M. Cohen, "'A little learning'?: The curriculum and the construction of gender difference in the long eighteenth century', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (2006), pp. 321-335.

<sup>136</sup> Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, p. xvi.

<sup>137</sup> K. O'Brien, *Women and enlightenment in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 2009).

Recent research by Clare Barlow and Leonie Hannan has shown important insights into the lives of women writers, both those who published as well as elite women letter-writers deeply entrenched in a rich intellectual 'life of the mind'. Barlow has examined reputations and representations of female writers in the public eye.<sup>138</sup> Hannan's study of the corpus of 500 letters written between 1650 and 1750 uncovered the intellectual culture of elite women, to argue that, 'the connection between corresponding and thinking was not simply due to the wider networks of exchange brought by epistolary practice, but also inherent in the processes of letter-writing itself'.<sup>139</sup> Describing an intractable relationship between thinking and letter writing, Hannan's work complements my research on the relationships between reading, diary-writing and intellectual life. In such a framework, diaries provided a mechanism for the mental digestion of text, in the same way that letter-writing aided the processing of ideas within intellectual cultures. Hannan shows how letters provide evidence of women's rich thinking worlds in the period.

With the growth of gender history, a new historiography of masculinity has emerged over the previous two decades. The field has close links to women's history, gender history and the history of sexuality. As historians began to consider women's lives in the past as well as issues of gender more generally, questions on manliness and masculinity began to gain relevance, particularly in the mid-1990s. John Tosh called for discussion of the concepts in 1994 with the question, 'What should historians do with masculinity?'<sup>140</sup> In response, historians have since undertaken

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<sup>138</sup> K.C. Barlow, 'Female writers in the public eye: virtue, patriotism and publication 1740-1790', unpublished PhD thesis, London, 2010.

<sup>139</sup> L.K.J. Hannan, 'Women, letter-writing and the life of the mind in England, c.1650-1750', unpublished PhD thesis, London, 2009, p. 46.

<sup>140</sup> J. Tosh, 'What should historians do with masculinity? Reflections on nineteenth-century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), pp. 179-202.

several methodological approaches.<sup>141</sup> One of these tactics has been to make a social historical analysis of how masculinity interacted with social status and class. Following the argument of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall that gender and class work concurrently, Anthony Fletcher has agreed that, increasingly in the eighteenth century with the growth of the middling sections of society, masculinity was a facet of class values that favoured a strict adherence to new codes of politeness.<sup>142</sup> These trends linked with geographical and economic developments of the period. While London grew and flourished as a hub of economic power, the impulses of polite culture fashionable in the capital influenced the provinces. Through new communication and transport links, the country gentry could maintain essential ties to London and sustain a significant degree of power and wealth. In order to harness such opportunities, the propertied male had to live up to expectations of polite comportment. This meant exhibiting 'honesty, financial probity, religious seriousness, domestic calm and good order'.<sup>143</sup> Economic and social success was therefore reliant upon a correct form of masculinity. The chapter in this thesis on the 'occupational reader' engages with such a methodology in order to reconstruct the relationship between middling masculinity and reading.

Another methodological approach has been to emphasise 'selfhood and the subjective experience of being male'.<sup>144</sup> In Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen's collection, *English Masculinities 1660-1800*, writers explore the diversity of categories of masculinity in the period. At a superficial glance, there appears to be a range from macho heterosexuality to effeminate

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<sup>141</sup> K. Harvey and A. Shepard, 'What have historians done with masculinity? Reflections on five centuries of British history circa 1500-1950', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), pp. 274-80.

<sup>142</sup> A. Fletcher, *Gender, sex and subordination in England 1500-1800* (London, 1995), p. 325.

<sup>143</sup> T. Hitchcock and M. Cohen, eds., *English masculinities 1660-1800* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 15-16.

<sup>144</sup> Harvey and Shepard, 'Masculinity', p. 275.

homosexuality.<sup>145</sup> Upon closer inspection, however, the picture becomes rather more complicated. For example, the highly effeminate fop, characterized by excessive fashion, a weak constitution and exaggerated manners, was associated with heterosexuality, rather than homosexuality. The critique of the fop in the period, despite being a criticism of effeminacy, had nothing to do with sexuality.

To move away from anachronistic associations between gender identity and sexuality, Hitchcock and Cohen's collection draws attention to 'an alternative understanding of many of the same issues of gender identity and definition...found in the large body of work now available on honour and reputation'.<sup>146</sup> Fletcher, for example, has explored the diminishing value of violence in the maintenance of honour, as it was increasingly replaced by civility.<sup>147</sup> The attack on the duel as an arbitration tactic began in the early eighteenth century as commentators saw it as barbaric, a threat to stable government and un-Christian. Later in the century, Beau Nash, famous ruler over festivities at eighteenth-century spa towns such as Bath and Tunbridge Wells, banned swords in company. Reliance on physical force and weaponry was seen as antiquated, not to mention antithetical to Christian gentlemanly behaviour. Jeremy Gregory has worked on the concept of 'Homo Religiosus', the ideally pious eighteenth-century man, as constructed in conduct literature.<sup>148</sup> This figure was to be forgiving and magnanimous, not battling against the world or withdrawing, but engaged with the daily business of life. The *vita activa* was held up as the pattern to emulate, rather than the *vita contemplativa*.<sup>149</sup> Men were to look to Christian male role models such as Jesus and St. Paul, men of action. Again, dueling was

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<sup>145</sup> Hitchcock and Cohen, *Masculinities*, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> Hitchcock and Cohen, *Masculinities*, p. 13.

<sup>147</sup> Fletcher, *Gender*, p. 323.

<sup>148</sup> J. Gregory, 'Homo Religiosus: masculinity and religion in the long eighteenth century', in Hitchcock and Cohen, *Masculinities*, pp. 85-110.

<sup>149</sup> Gregory, 'Religiosus', p. 96.

criticised, this time as a form of suicide, as well as a self-centred act.<sup>150</sup>

Many historians have looked to contemporary prescriptive literature in search of categories of masculinity. Fletcher has found that control and dignity, correct behavior without artifice, defined a model of masculinity in conduct books for men from 1660-1678.<sup>151</sup> Philip Carter's study on representations of foppery emphasises the importance of conversation in men's interaction with others as a way of displaying the right 'brand of sociability that was characterized by integrity and ease'.<sup>152</sup> In other words, men were to be engaging and mannerly, without overdoing polite conventions to the point of superficiality. The ability to converse relied on proper reading habits as commentators thought books would guide young men and women in politeness. This thesis elaborates upon conversation and reading throughout the thesis.

Similar to many scholars of women's history, historians of masculinity have done much work on prescriptive literature as a source base, as mentioned above in the studies of Fletcher and Gregory.<sup>153</sup> Undoubtedly, Gregory's findings from advice manuals for the ideally devout, is critical to our understanding of masculinity in this period. It is particularly relevant to the case studies on middling men who used their reading practices to fulfil religious duty as well as contemplate Christianity. Philip Carter's study on James Boswell is a superb example of how an individual case study on a man who left evidence of his actual experiences can highlight critical facets of eighteenth-century masculinity. As a young man, Boswell was obsessed with achieving 'manliness'

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<sup>150</sup> Gregory, 'Religiosus', p. 99.

<sup>151</sup> Fletcher, *Gender*, p. 332

<sup>152</sup> P. Carter, 'Men about town: representations of foppery and masculinity in early eighteenth-century urban society', H. Barker and E. Chalus, eds., *Gender in eighteenth-century England: roles, representations and responsibilities* (London, 1997), pp. 31-57.

<sup>153</sup> Gregory, 'Religiosus', pp. 106-107.

and acquiring ‘manly’ qualities.<sup>154</sup> When Boswell spoke of such qualities he was speaking of styles defined ‘first, in terms of dignity, economy and independence...second, gentility, sympathy and sociability’.<sup>155</sup> Male readers analysed in this thesis displayed similar characteristics, reinforced by their reading habits.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

The overarching structure of the thesis is as follows. The first research chapter explores ideal reading practices throughout the long eighteenth century. Here, the contemporary educational context, cultural meanings of virtue and politeness for men and women, trends in bibliographic recommendations for young people, and prescriptions of material practice are surveyed. The sources for this chapter are eighteenth-century published texts on education, conduct, politeness, reform and religion. This body of evidence did not represent a single, distinct voice on ideal reading, but rather a variety of opinions, from which it is possible to detect a few commonalities. Most importantly, this chapter is not indicative of actual practice, but rather ideologies of reading. It represents Darnton’s first tactic for understanding the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of reading, that which uncovers ideals and assumptions underlying reading in the past.<sup>156</sup>

The remaining research chapters focus on case studies that reveal eighteenth-century reading lives, arranged roughly in chronological order. Chapter Three examines ‘occupational’ male readers, beginning in the 1690s and continuing throughout the century. The chapter includes seven middling and professional men. It is argued that such men used reading to acquire

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<sup>154</sup> P. Carter, ‘James Boswell’s manliness’, in Hitchcock and Cohen, *Masculinities*, pp. 111-130, p. 113.

<sup>155</sup> Carter, ‘Boswell’, p. 115.

<sup>156</sup> See p. 30 above. Darnton, ‘History of reading’, pp. 169-176.



knowledge and erudition, often bolstering career prospects. Print consumption was also central to masculine piety, sociability and financial planning.

Moving on from middling men and their careers, to a philosophical man, Chapter Four investigates the life of political propagandist, Thomas Hollis, who used books as tools to educate and enlighten likeminded friends, particularly those who were in positions of political influence, in the 1750s and 1760s. He donated books and objects to museums, individuals, libraries and universities in order to spread republican ideas about liberty. Hollis challenges straightforward notions about masculinity and the public sphere in this period through his anonymous donations and refusal to take public office. His reading of seventeenth-century political tracts and his deployment of concepts such as *Virtù*, suggest an engagement with pre-eighteenth-century notions of masculinity. Thus, his reading provided an alternative philosophical and political script to that offered by his own period, even while he believed in reading's power to stimulate collective improvement.

Chapter Five explores the lives of two bluestocking writers, Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Montagu, in the second half of the eighteenth century. Though Talbot was less published than Montagu, both women used their reading to propel themselves forward in their personal and public lives as intellectuals and literary figures. The reading networks, connected through epistolary correspondence and education, meant that they could achieve authorial success, both published and manuscript.<sup>157</sup> Talbot's and Montagu's disciplined reading habits enabled their achievements as authors. Print consumption provided such women access to a public world of authorship dominated by men.

Anna Larpent is the sole study in Chapter Six, which analyses the 'virtuous reader' in the 1790s. Larpent read

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<sup>157</sup> Barlow, 'Female writers'.

strenuously throughout her life, consuming books in the morning, day and evening. Her dedication to reading meant that she was strategic and skilled as a literary critic, even though she never published her reviews and commentaries. Her assertive, critical voice was evidence of a discerning reader. As her husband was Examiner of Plays, so Larpent was engaged in her own routines of cultural review. Her reading also enriched her educational lessons given to her sons. Larpent tied her own interests as a reader to her goals for her family. At the same time, she gained spiritual and emotional comfort through her books. The consumption of print enabled Larpent's pious habits, particularly the reading of devotionals, sermons, the Bible and other theological texts.

Finally, Chapter Seven is an analysis of the reading life of Anne Lister, who immersed herself in books and cultural references to support an image of herself as 'special', justifying her nature as a lover of women in the 1810s and 1820s. Books and classical learning were also integral to her class identity, as a landowner and estate manager. She saw her library and her book collection as significant to her sense of individuality. Finally, epistolary networks and the sociability of reading formed a glue for romantic relationships without which Lister would not have been able to communicate or maintain her love affairs.

In sum, the examination of twelve reading lives explores the daily and long-term outcomes of reading in eighteenth-century England. These are of central interest to the study of women's history and men's history. While print culture of the period was highly gendered, particularly in the expectations and assumptions about male and female readers, the way readers actually read, the 'hows' of reading, was not affected by gender. Based on the case studies examined here, there was not a male reading mode or a female reading mode, even though goals for reading could relate to gender. At the same time, readers intended their books to provide opportunities for individual and collective improvement, shaped by

cultural prerogatives, despite restrictive guidelines from some advice literature. Thus, this thesis aims to create a new framework for the history of reading that poses the fundamental importance of gender, culture and the self in conceptualising 'reading for life'.

## Chapter Two

### The Ideal Reader

One effective source for identifying contemporary ideal reading expectations is the corpus of eighteenth-century writers on education.<sup>1</sup> Education was a key topic of debate in which ideas about learning were changing, buoyed by increased access to print. Central to these developments was the widely held cultural belief that education, for both girls and boys, should instil virtue and form character.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson defined virtue as ‘moral goodness; opposed to vice’, while Johnson’s friend, the clergyman William Adams, described it as ‘the conformity of imperfect beings to the dictates of reason, or to right’.<sup>3</sup> Reason and moral goodness interlinked. Children were born as blank slates, as proposed by John Locke in 1690 and teachers were to inscribe correct lessons upon them.<sup>4</sup> Virtuous, well-rounded adults would result from a good education of prescribed suitable reading. ‘A Man who has spent his Youth in Reading, has been used to find Virtue extolled, and Vice stigmatized’, wrote the authors of the *Spectator* in 1713.<sup>5</sup> Books were a ‘Guide in Youth’, according to the popular conduct work, *The lady’s preceptor*, published in 1743.<sup>6</sup> The author of *The Ladies Library* suggested in 1714 that young women would find ‘Patterns of Virtue’

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for list of publications used to study ‘ideal reading’ in the eighteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, ‘The curriculum’, pp. 321-335

<sup>3</sup> S. Johnson, ‘Virtue’, *A dictionary of the English language, sixth edition* (London, 1785). William Adams (1706-1789) was a Church of England clergyman and college head. He published some sermons and an essay. L. Stephen, ‘Adams, William (1706-1789)’, rev. Pat Bancroft, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/136>, accessed 04 Mar. 2012]. W. Adams, *The nature and obligation of virtue* (London, 1754), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> John Locke (1632-1704) was a seventeenth-century philosopher whose theories on education were highly influential for eighteenth century practices of education. His idea on tabula rasa was outlined in an *Essay concerning human understanding* (1690). In *Some thoughts concerning education* (1693) he wrote about the importance of reforming the boy’s curriculum to make it more pragmatic and less focused simply on the teaching of Latin. He stressed the importance of learning in English. See A. Immel, ‘Children’s books and school-books’, in Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 736-749.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spectator*, no. 469, 28 August, 1712, vol. 6 (London, 1713), p. 412.

<sup>6</sup> Ancourt, abbé. d’, *The lady’s preceptor. Or, a letter to a young lady of distinction upon politeness* (London, 1743), p. 62.

through the reading of specific genres like history.<sup>7</sup> Reading correctly was essential for the successful education of young people.

Despite prescriptive patterns described in many educational tracts, the adults studied in this thesis read in a diverse, relatively free and empowering mode. The prescriptions of advice literature, particularly those based on gender, did not curtail readers' actual experiences of print consumption. The readers analysed throughout this thesis were educated from youth through various modes and institutions of instruction.<sup>8</sup> While this enabled them to pursue goals of independent improvement by reading later in life, they rarely adopted the more limited constraints of reading recommended by advice writers while young. This first contextual chapter acts as a comparison point for the following case study chapters, in order to analyse the relationship between educational precept and actual reading experiences.

Readers had a strong belief in the improving qualities of the printed word and sometimes they understood these qualities in terms of virtue. However, the readers studied here did not see virtue as something precarious, threatened by books. Reading sustained, rather than challenged, virtuous self-improvement. While prescriptions did not confine readers, especially women readers who faced stricter guidelines, readers did assent to the notion that reading was a source of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and pragmatic betterment. This chapter will explore eighteenth-century conceptions of education in order to compare cultural definitions of virtue and civility for men and women. It will also analyse the literary curriculum and examine prescriptions for proper reading habits.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Anon., *The ladies library*, vol. I (London, 1714), p. 20-21, published by Richard Steele.

<sup>8</sup> There was a spectrum of educational sources through which the readers obtained learning which included private tutors, auto-didacticism, parents, governesses, schools and universities. In many cases, readers received education through a combination of these sources throughout their youth.

<sup>9</sup> Curriculum meant a regular course of study or training. 'curriculum, n.', OED Online (Oxford, June 2012) accessed 5 July 2012.

The conclusion will summarise the findings and explain their relevance to the later chapters.

### **The Context of Education**

Education in this period was a cultural practice, rather than a political, social, or purely instructive practice.<sup>10</sup> Some have argued for a new cultural historical approach in the study of eighteenth-century education:

To this purpose it is necessary not only to describe the history of education as part of a history of structures, processes and representations, and to acknowledge its extraordinary fluidity at the level of ideas, but in doing so to explore the rich realities and ambiguities of teaching and learning and their shifting meanings within the complex cultural milieu in which they were practised.<sup>11</sup>

The pages of didactic, advice, conduct and reform publications defined how and why eighteenth-century reading existed within an educational setting. Educational precepts about the value of books existed in books and thus print comprised a self-perpetuating culture given meaning by its readers. One historian has claimed that ‘literature, from “high” to “low,” from epic poems to Sunday-school prize books’, played a key role in shaping and effecting transformations in schooling and in the social function of reading’.<sup>12</sup> It is critical to consider the composition of printed beliefs about education, especially in a gender context, as well as what they reveal

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<sup>10</sup> Earlier studies often focused on schooling as a framework for studying the history of education. Hilton and Shefrin et al, suggest a cultural approach to understanding the field. Hilton and Shefrin, *Educating*, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Hilton and Shefrin, *Educating*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> A. Richardson, *Literature, education and Romanticism: reading as social practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge, 1994), p. xiv.

about the status of reading in the period. What interaction was there between educational ideas and notions about the purpose and value of reading? Does the idea of a 'curriculum' make the two practices (pedagogic and reading) distinctive?<sup>13</sup> This chapter on ideologies about the curriculum and recommended books provides the cultural context of the following case study chapters.

Women's education was a particular obsession of social reformers and advice writers in the 'enlightened' England. Both men and women reformers argued for the benefits of improved opportunities for women's learning.<sup>14</sup> These benefits included not just a general betterment of society and 'progress', but also 'emotional and intellectual autonomy' for women, as well as a path to enhanced self-esteem.<sup>15</sup> Women writers on reform promoted these latter benefits, which were not always representative of advice writers' goals for a female curriculum. Eighteenth-century advice writers usually argued that a girl's curriculum was to be 'suitable' to her needs. The result of the curriculum was not to meet the needs of femininity, but to create it.<sup>16</sup> Such commentators dictated which books and subjects girls should read and study according to a 'gendered hierarchy of mental difference'.<sup>17</sup> Reading was prescribed in line with the hierarchy in which certain genres and reading practices were considered unsuitable for female minds. Generally, girls were to be

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<sup>13</sup> Cohen, 'The curriculum', p. 321. Cohen discusses the definition and purpose of the curriculum.

<sup>14</sup> See M. Cohen, "'To think, to compare, to combine, to methodise': notes towards rethinking girls' education in the eighteenth century," in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 224–42; K. Gleadle, *The early feminists: radical Unitarians and the emergence of the women's rights movement, 1831–1851* (New York, 1995); H. Guest, *Small change: women, learning, patriotism, 1750–1810* (Chicago, 2000); B. Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the feminist imagination* (Cambridge, 2003); R. Watts, *Gender, power and the Unitarians in England, 1760–1860* (London, 1998); A. Chernock, 'Cultivating woman: men's pursuit of intellectual equality in the late British Enlightenment', *Journal of British Studies*, 45, (July, 2006), pp. 511–531.

<sup>15</sup> M. Bolufer Peruga, 'Gender and the reasoning mind: introduction', in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 189–194. Bolufer Peruga writes, 'Also, in contrast to men who tended to stress the utilitarian side of women's education (educating women to be responsible wives and mothers, or polite participants in elite society) women writers tended to value learning as a route to emotional and intellectual autonomy, a path to self-esteem and the pleasure of solitary reflection as well as those of literary glory', p. 191.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, 'The curriculum', pp. 321–335.

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, 'The curriculum', p. 334.

educated to be virtuous and devout wives and mothers: that is, companionate mates for husbands, efficient household managers as well as instructors and caretakers of children. Advice writers recommended books for girls and young women in accordance with these goals. Thus, an ideal femininity determined ideal reading. Prescriptions on femininity did not promote a free range of reading opportunities and were usually incompatible with reformers' goals for autonomy, self-esteem and literary success.

Much eighteenth-century debate on gender and education revolved around questions of public and private instruction.<sup>18</sup> Before the establishment of commercial schools in the seventeenth century and their expansion in the eighteenth, girls were always educated in a domestic setting at home. Commercial schools for boys and girls operated for the profit of their teachers, unlike the pre-existing grammar and public schools for boys funded by charity or endowments.<sup>19</sup> Commercial schools provided the first opportunity for girls to be educated outside a domestic setting in which a mother or governess provided instruction. While this was innovative, it did not mean that schooling was necessarily more rigorous than domestic instruction.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, some eighteenth-century critics of girls' boarding schools worried about 'false' and 'pernicious' teaching, as well as a dangerous mixing of social classes.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, some critics of home schooling for boys argued that it did not equip boys

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<sup>18</sup> Cohen, 'Gender and the private/public debate on education in the long eighteenth century', in R. Aldrich, ed. *Public or private education? Lessons from history* (London, 2004), p. 15-35.

<sup>19</sup> S. Skedd, 'Women teachers and the expansion of girls' schooling in England, c1760-1820', in H. Barker and E. Chalus, eds., *Gender in eighteenth-century England* (London 1997), pp. 101-125, p. 101. For more on grammar schools and commercial schools see, R. S. Thompson, *Classics or charity? The dilemma of the 18<sup>th</sup> century grammar school* (Manchester, 1971), and M.E. Bryant, *The London experience of secondary education* (London, 1986).

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, 'The curriculum', pp. 321-335.

<sup>21</sup> Cohen, 'The curriculum', pp. 321-335. Also, see Cohen, 'Mothers of sons, mothers of daughters: the ambiguous figure of the mother in eighteenth-century educational discourse', in D. Crook and G. McCulloch, eds., *History, politics and policy-making in education: a festschrift presented to Richard Aldrich*, (London, 2007), pp. 13-29, p. 20. Also, see discussion on the public/private debate in Cohen's 'Girls' education', pp. 224-242.



for their future careers.<sup>22</sup> Again, commentary on education in this period was highly contentious, particularly within the context of gender. Critics of change fretted about the suitability of the female mind to absorb erudition in terms of schooling and content, as well as the proper setting for the education of boys. Commentators contested the appropriateness of certain books within such debates.

Schoolbooks and books for children comprised one of the most important new markets in the book trade in the long eighteenth century. John Locke's legacy in reforming curriculum had a great influence on the expanded market for children's books.<sup>23</sup> Throughout the century, an increasing demand meant a developing sophistication in these works, both in concept and presentation.<sup>24</sup> The growth in books published for children mirrored an increase in educational writing, some of which included lists of books recommended to children and young people. The growth in publication rates of such books was a reflection of the growth of schooling opportunities, the development of children's books as a distinct print market, changing theories on gender within the Enlightenment, and the general expansion of print culture toward the end of the century.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Prescriptive Canon**

A large corpus of 60 printed works offers evidence of the range of prescriptions for ideal reading. This writing varied from guides for schools, recommendations to mothers and governesses on domestic teaching, general advice literature on polite learning, often in epistolary format, as well as lectures and treatises on education reform. These works usually contained a chapter or section on

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<sup>22</sup> Cohen, 'Girls' education', p. 226.

<sup>23</sup> Immel, 'Children's books', pp. 736-749.

<sup>24</sup> Immel, 'Children's books', p. 744.

<sup>25</sup> Immel, 'Children's books', p. 736.

reading, and sometimes book lists or recommendations for specific book titles necessary for an ideal curriculum. This chapter contains an analysis of commentary from such publications, with particular focus on book recommendations as part of an ideal curriculum.<sup>26</sup> Some portions of *The Spectator*, sermons, plays and general commentary on eighteenth century culture have also been investigated in order to gain further perspective on public opinion. The writing analysed here was just a portion of the printed material published on ideal reading practices in the period. Even within this small sample, there was a wide variety of views, emphasising that there was never a single homogenous public position on perfect reading practices. The texts varied in their intended audience and purpose. A comment in *The Spectator* on polite reading served a different purpose to a reading list suggested for a school, for example. Diversity of audience and purpose is fundamental but it is possible to identify a set of common trends in cultural opinion of the period. Once again, this is not to imply that such views represented homogeneity in cultural standards, nor did they represent lived practice.

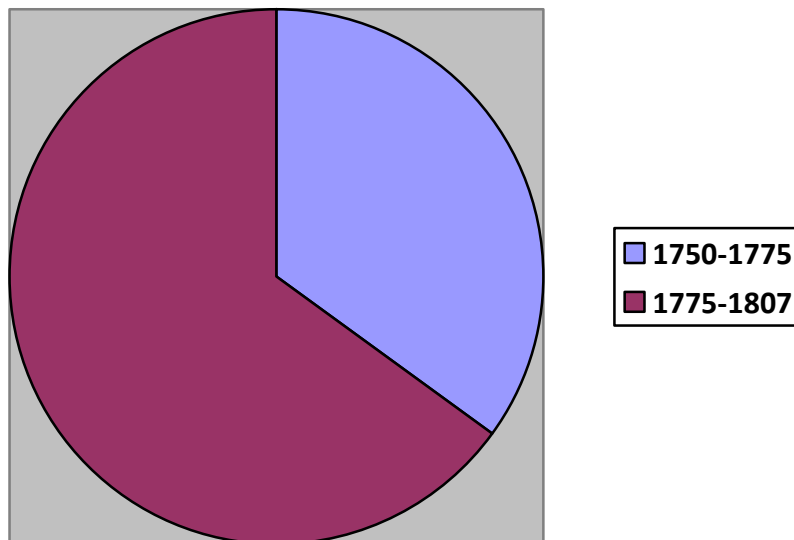
The sample of 60 publications was achieved through a refined set of keyword searches on Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) as well as through secondary source research. There are problems with this method related to the fact that ECCO was derived from the ESTC, which is not a statistical tool. Not all books published in the period are in the ESTC, as some may not have survived or some may not have been included in the catalogue. Furthermore, keyword searches could overlook books that discussed ideal reading in terms other than those expected. However, this bibliometric sample does reinforce what has been shown by other book historians

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<sup>26</sup> Six of the publications on education analysed here contained formal book lists or catalogues, while the rest mentioned books suggested within prose sections on appropriate reading choices.

which suggests some degree of reliability.<sup>27</sup> The publication dates of the books sampled range from 1630 to 1807, though only six works studied were published in the seventeenth century. 40 of the 60 works were published in the second half of the eighteenth century. 26 of the 60 were published from 1775 to 1807. This suggests that the amount of educational writing increased significantly from the 1750s onward, especially in the last quarter of century. See chart below.

Books published that contained recommendations for 'ideal reading' between 1750 and 1807



|              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1750-1775    | 1775-1807     |
| 14 books=35% | 26 books =65% |

Like the increase in the number of schoolbooks published, books on education increased, highlighting the importance of education as a print genre in the latter part of the century. Gender was a key aspect

<sup>27</sup> See Suarez, 'Bibliometric', pp. 46.

of the education debate to which the bluestockings contributed important published works. These writers published their work in the second half of the eighteenth century. Given the aims of the thesis to explore gender, bluestocking texts comprise a substantial portion of the sample.

Curriculum was the main concept connecting ideas about reading and education in the eighteenth century because it dictated appropriate subjects for study, and thus appropriate genres for reading. Michèle Cohen has shown how curriculum for girls differed from that for boys.<sup>28</sup> In general, boys' learning amongst the gentry was always classical, which included the learning of Greek and Latin. Girls' learning was modern, including languages such as French and Italian, as well as a wider variety of subjects. As girls' education was widely discussed, there was more commentary on appropriate reading practices for females than there was for males. However, boys' education was up for debate as well, particularly due to the influence of John Locke and his promotion of grammar school reform, pragmatic learning and the study of English, rather than simply Latin.<sup>29</sup> While some commentators stressed progressive reform for both genders, others imposed limitations and prescriptions for girls in line with a need to maintain the marital status quo.<sup>30</sup> Advice writers were likely to discourage young women from reading certain genres in certain environments: novels and circulating libraries could be 'dangerous' to female virtue, as will be discussed further below. Writers never applied such restrictions to boys' reading.

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<sup>28</sup> Cohen 'The curriculum' and the 'Girls' education'.

<sup>29</sup> Immel, 'Children's books', p. 737.

<sup>30</sup> See Goodman, *Letters*, pp. 63-99.

## **Men, Women and Goals of Education**

Virtue, a main goal of education, was at the centre of debates on reading and the curriculum. Boys and girls both had to read correctly to attain virtue, but girls' sense of virtue was thought to be more precarious and thus more at threat from the 'wrong' books. Commentators prescribed young men's reading much less than young women's reading. The wrong books were considered a threat to female virtue in a variety of ways. Novels were thought to promote fanciful, or, even, scandalous lifestyles. Dense books that were overly complex could lead women into pedantry, and thus de-feminisation. Controversial theology could compromise a woman's piety and promote heresy. The exploration of book recommendations in this chapter will contain an elaboration on these perceived threats. Young men could be lead astray by bad reading habits in youth, but the danger of 'bad books' was not the problem. Rather, a lack of studiousness and dedication to polite learning or duty could threaten a young man's future success. At the same time, men were in danger of pedantry as well. However, this concern was less about a threat to virtue, but instead, a lack of civility in social interactions.

Some commentators believed virtuous reading for young males would instruct them to serve the world correctly as gentlemen. The high church clergyman, Francis Brokesby, for example, advised university students against reading and learning 'merely to satisfie our selves, and to gratifie our own Curiosity, in which likewise we frequently fail'.<sup>31</sup> Reading for young men was meant to make them

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<sup>31</sup> Francis Brokesby (1637-1714) was a non-juring Church of England clergyman who published a number of works on the church, history and education. D. A. Brunton, 'Brokesby, Francis (1637-1714)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3499>, accessed 04 Mar. 2012] F. Brokesby, *Of education with respect to grammar schools, and the universities; concluding with directions to young students in the universities. To which is annexed A letter of advice to a young gentleman* (London, 1701), p. 178.

into 'wise and good Men, and serviceable to the World'.<sup>32</sup> Britain would benefit through the education of its male youth who would empower the nation as politicians and members of the professions.<sup>33</sup> Cohen has highlighted this in her work on the mother in eighteenth-century education. Educationalist John Burton wrote, 'political Government may be said to derive from the strength of the nursery'.<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Montagu believed men should study eloquence, but in order to be good orators, they had to have good characters first. She considered virtue to be 'the muse of eloquence' and conduct was to be learnt from 'the sacred book' (the Bible).<sup>35</sup> Thus, men's reading would promote proper breeding and piety that would benefit the nation. Montagu wrote to guide future politician, Thomas Lyttelton, in his education, saying, 'your talents and situation will fit you for public trusts; it is a duty... to give your virtue every strength and then to employ it in the service of your country'.<sup>36</sup> John Milton's conception of education was 'that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war'.<sup>37</sup> Men's proper reading habits in youth would benefit the nation.

Another purpose of virtue in reading for men was to comply with codes of politeness and avoid pedantry.<sup>38</sup> For John Locke, such virtue was absolutely the most important aim of education. He

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<sup>32</sup> Brokesby, *Education*, p. 178.

<sup>33</sup> See pp. 121-122 in Occupational Reader chapter, in which John Cannon talks about strengthening the nation through trade.

<sup>34</sup> J. Burton, *Lectures on female education and manners, two vols.* (London, 1793), as quoted by Cohen in 'The mother', p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> This quote comes from *BIWLD*, Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Thomas Lyttelton, 2nd Baron, 1758?, in *The letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4952-D019. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011. Thomas Lyttelton (1744-1779), was a politician. His father asked that Montagu write to him while a boy advising him how to behave prudently and virtuously. J. Cannon, 'Lyttelton, Thomas, second Baron Lyttelton (1744-1779)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17310>, accessed 04 Mar. 2012].

<sup>36</sup> Montagu, Letter to Lyttelton.

<sup>37</sup> John Milton (1608-1674) was a poet and polemicist and the author of *Paradise lost* (1667). J. Milton, *Of education* (London, 1644). G. Campbell, 'Milton, John (1608-1674)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18800>, accessed 09 Feb. 2012].

<sup>38</sup> See M. Cohen *Fashioning masculinity: national identity and language in the eighteenth century* (London, 1996); Klein, *Shaftesbury*; Klein, 'Politeness'.

believed it was the hardest quality to attain, and if lost, almost impossible to recover.<sup>39</sup> In this sense, correct scholarship and reading were not enough to produce a virtuous mind on their own, though, undoubtedly, they were part of the requirements. A 'virtuous, or a wise man' was valued higher than a 'great scholar'.<sup>40</sup> Reading would help a man master the art of conversation and it would distinguish him intellectually. The correct books were necessary for correct conversational practices, for both women and men.<sup>41</sup> Conversational ideals varied for the genders. While women were considered to be a civilising force on men's conversation, women's conversation could also be seen as vulgar. At the same time, mutual conversation between the sexes was thought to be the best way to achieve politeness.<sup>42</sup> Historians have argued that bluestocking conversation was a force of empowerment for women who saw it as a means of asserting social and intellectual equality through a new form of sociability.<sup>43</sup>

Civility required that men be conversationalists. Contemporary historian, John Andrews, wrote, 'Conversation is the criterion of almost every man's intellectual merit'.<sup>44</sup> Conversation was also a source of learning in itself. One author wrote that polite men could acquire knowledge in two ways: by reading and by conversation.<sup>45</sup> Verbal sociability was thus a source of betterment, but it was not intended to alienate people. The ability to converse in company and

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<sup>39</sup> Locke, *Education*, p. 157.

<sup>40</sup> Locke, *Education*, p. 174

<sup>41</sup> This will be discussed further throughout the thesis. See *Bluestocking, Virtuous and Romantic Reader* chapters. See also, Klein, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 96-101.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity*, p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> E. Eger, "'The noblest commerce of mankind': conversation and community in the bluestocking circle' in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 288-305.

<sup>44</sup> John Andrews (1736?-1809), was a historian and moralist who enjoyed modest fame in his lifetime. He published a few histories, but has been shown to have plagiarised some of his work. N. L. York, 'Andrews, John (1736?-1809)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/527>, accessed 04 Mar. 2012] J. Andrews, *An analysis of the principal duties of social life: written in imitation of Rochefoucault: in a series of letters to a young gentleman, on his entrance into the world* (London, 1783), p. 148.

<sup>45</sup> J. Rice, *A lecture on the importance and necessity of rendering the English language as a peculiar branch of female education: and on the mode of instruction* (1773), p. 31.

keep others at ease was characteristic of polite manners that aspired to inclusivity.<sup>46</sup> Discussions thus had to rely on a topic in which all those present could participate, rather than a singular obsession of one speaker, unknown or of little interest to the rest of the group. The male pedant was characterised by excessive reading at the expense of polite codes of sociability. He was not polite.

Commentators discussed the impracticality of the 'pedantical veneration' of Greek and Latin in universities in wider debates on male education.<sup>47</sup> In some cases, parents turned away from a strictly classical education for boys in favour of more useful subjects.<sup>48</sup> To be a gentleman, good breeding was necessary. As pointed out by Cohen, Lord Chesterfield thought that without politeness, 'mere learning is pedantry'.<sup>49</sup> Higher education was blamed for placing too much emphasis on 'Deep Learning', the Classics, rather than training men to be well-bred and accomplished. While explaining that knowledge was to be acquired out in the world on the streets of the city, one novelist wrote in *The Narrative Companion or, Entertaining Moralist*, that:

It has been generally imagined, that learning is only to be acquired in the closet, by turning over a great number of pages: for which reason men have been assiduous to heap together a parcel of dusty volumes, and our youth have been sent to study at universities: as if knowledge were shut up in a library.<sup>50</sup>

For this anonymous commentator, one did not simply acquire 'knowledge' through books and reading, but rather through

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<sup>46</sup> Klein, 'Politeness', p. 891

<sup>47</sup> The phrase 'pedantical veneration' came from a work by R. Wynne, *Essays on education by Milton, Locke, and the authors of the Spectator, &c.* (London, 1761). p. 181.

<sup>48</sup> M. Cohen, 'Girls' education', p. 233 and Immel, 'Children's books', p. 737.

<sup>49</sup> Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity*, p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Anon., *The narrative companion or, entertaining moralist: containing choice of the most elegant, interesting, and improving novels and allegories, from the best English writers, viz. the Spectator, Rambler, World, Adventurer, Connoisseur, &c. &c. vol.III* (London, 1760) p. 233.



experience out in the world and in company. Men were to obtain the accomplishments of the ideal courtier advocated in the famous Renaissance work, *The Book of the Courtier*, by Baldassare Castiglione (athleticism, including ‘vaulting the horse’, good bearing, a strong voice and a warrior spirit, along with knowledge of the humanities), to make them more likable and appealing amongst a range of other people.<sup>51</sup> Castiglione’s work, originally published in the sixteenth century, was reprinted in 1727 and 1742, its preface acknowledging the value of liberal arts.<sup>52</sup> Liberal arts would enable men to advance their fortune in the world. Pedantry was dusty, unsociable and selfish. It was the folly of men of the university, many of whom were clerical, who did not bother to take up wider accomplishments, but instead, repaired to houses outside of town to ‘drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more’.<sup>53</sup> This image of a reclusive, miserable scholar was not that of a well-bred man of the world.

While a young man was to avoid pedantry, it was not desirable that he should ignore his reading either. Politeness included a dedication to study. Men were not to forfeit polite company in order to satisfy selfish or unsociable appetites for books, but they were to be sufficiently educated to carry out a career and maintain amiable relationships.<sup>54</sup> The danger this time was not of pedantry, but youthful pleasure-seeking at the expense of learning. An author of an educational treatise wrote in the 1760s:

I am much concerned, when I see young gentlemen of fortune and quality so wholly set upon pleasures and diversions, that they neglect all those improvements in wisdom and knowledge

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<sup>51</sup> Wynne, *Essays*, p. 183.

<sup>52</sup> *Il cortegiano, or the courtier: written by Conte Baldassar Castiglione. And a new version of the same into English, by A.P. Castiglione, of the same family* (London, 1727), p. 3 of the dedication.

<sup>53</sup> Wynne, *Essays*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>54</sup> Klein has shown that not only was conversation the paradigmatic arena for politeness, but intellectual and literary endeavours were required as well. Politeness was a criterion of proper behaviour, which included polite learning. Klein, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 3-5.

which may make them easy to themselves, and useful to the world. The greatest part of our British youth lose their figure and grow out of fashion, by that time they are five and twenty.<sup>55</sup>

Lack of education and reading in youth equalled a future of dissipation. In such a predicament, men could not fulfil their duties to be of service in their careers and in their families. Only through a dedication to appropriate reading and learning would they learn to be gentlemen.

The purpose of education differed for females. Women were to be equipped for success as daughters, wives and mothers, but according to progressive educational treatises characteristic of this period, female virtue also depended on a dedication to suitable literary consumption. At the end of the period studied here, Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Female Reader*, a compilation of instructive readings for women was meant to 'illustrate precepts of morality', impart some 'useful lessons', 'cultivate the taste', improve a woman's speaking ability as well as sense of piety, and teach young women 'an attention to truth' and 'a dependence on Providence'.<sup>56</sup> Wollstonecraft's readers were to find ways to better themselves morally, verbally, practically, artistically and spiritually through textual consumption.

Hester Chapone wrote that reading would not just bring 'useful lessons' and fluency in polite conversation, but also pleasure.<sup>57</sup> In her *Letters on the improvement of the mind, addressed to a young lady* (1775), after making specific recommendations for which books

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<sup>55</sup> Wynne, *Essays*, p. 186

<sup>56</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was an author and advocate of women's right, most well-known for her publication of *A vindication of the rights of woman* (1792). B. Taylor, 'Wollstonecraft, Mary (1759-1797)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10893, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. Wollstonecraft, *The female reader*, Preface.

<sup>57</sup> Hester Chapone (1727-1801) was an author and bluestocking who argued for women's intellectual advancement. R. Zuk, 'Chapone, Hester (1727-1801)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5128, accessed 06 Mar. 2012].

young women should read, Chapone highlighted the importance of embracing learning as young women. She did indeed assert that neglecting one's reading would impinge on a woman's ability to instruct any children she might have. However, she also warned that neglect of reading would mean the loss of 'the sincerest of pleasures; a pleasure, which would remain when almost every other forsakes them—which neither fortune nor age can deprive them of—and which would be a comfort and resource in almost every possible situation of life'.<sup>58</sup> Reading was essential for self-betterment, but it was also a pleasure. Novelist Hannah Cartwright wrote that reading was instructive and amusing.<sup>59</sup> One list of recommended books for girls contained titles of 'instruction and amusement'.<sup>60</sup> Wollstonecraft suggested that daughters could discover many books that combined instruction and amusement.<sup>61</sup> Instruction was at the foundation of reading, but textual consumption could also be a pleasure. Books were not solely utilitarian means to an end for the ideal wife or mother. Education would be more successful were it to be combined with enjoyment.

Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis was a French moralist and educationalist writer whose writing on girls' education promoted a dedication to literary study.<sup>62</sup> Madame de Genlis appealed to late eighteenth-century English readers because of her criticism of Rousseau, and her belief that all of his good ideas had come from Locke and François Fénelon, the late seventeenth-century theologian, poet and writer.<sup>63</sup> She aimed to restore those earlier thinkers to the position that Rousseau had usurped in the history of education

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<sup>58</sup> H. Chapone, *Letters on the improvement of the mind, vol.II* (London, 1775), pp. 223-224.

<sup>59</sup> H. Cartwright, *Letters on female education. Addressed to a married lady*. (London, 1777), p. 43-44.

<sup>60</sup> M. Weightman, *The polite reasoner: in letters addressed to a young lady* (London, 1787), p. 75.

<sup>61</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the education of daughters* (London, 1787), p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Stéphanie Félicité Ducrest de St-Aubin, comtesse de Genlis (1746-1830) was a French writer and educator.

<sup>63</sup> M. Wahba, 'Madame de Genlis in England', *Comparative Literature*, 13 (Summer, 1961), pp. 221-238. p. 224.

philosophy.<sup>64</sup> Like Locke, she believed that reading was vital for the education of children. The British public received her novel *Adelaide and Theodore* (1783) very well. The work focussed on Adelaide's education in particular.<sup>65</sup> De Genlis was famous also for introducing the new pedagogical method of the morality play into British female education.<sup>66</sup> Her *Lessons of a Governess to her Pupils* (1792) contained a specific plan for education and learning. Even this work of conduct literature, with its heavy focus on devotion, morality and household management for girls, was concerned with teaching them history, mythology, law, orthography, medicine and mathematics. The programme for young ladies included an 'application to serious studies...(and a) taste for reading'.<sup>67</sup> It is clear that reading, according to De Genlis, was a subset of a wider debate on female learning and accomplishments. Reading properly was a skill to be learnt and cultivated, like other talents such as music, embroidery, painting and dancing, which would contribute to a polite education for young women.

Catharine Macaulay, historian and bluestocking, rather more radical than De Genlis, advocated the same educational methods for boys and girls in her 1790 work, *Letters on Education* (1790).<sup>68</sup> She proposed that reading was more than an 'accomplishment', but a necessary part of a girl's mental and intellectual development. According to Macaulay, young women's minds were to be cultivated through the same curriculum available to boys. The aim of this unisex approach was to allow women to be more agreeable to their

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<sup>64</sup> Wahba, 'Genlis', p. 224.

<sup>65</sup> Wahba, 'Genlis', p. 231.

<sup>66</sup> Wahba, 'Genlis', p. 224.

<sup>67</sup> S-F. de Genlis, *Lessons of a governess to her pupils*, vol. I (London, 1792), p. 148.

<sup>68</sup> Catharine Macaulay (1731-1791) was a historian and political polemicist associated with the bluestockings. Her eight-volume *History of England* was her most famous publication. Bridget Hill, 'Macaulay, Catharine (1731-1791)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17344>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. See, C. Macaulay, *Letters on education. With observations on religious and metaphysical subjects* (London, 1790).

husbands when it came to the faculties of the understanding.<sup>69</sup> Macaulay suggested that boys and girls be brought up together, which she argued would ultimately be beneficial for both sexes. Girls would have the wisdom to avoid coquetry and boys would learn to admire something more 'solid' in women than mere outward appearance.<sup>70</sup> Macaulay, who advocated the same education for both sexes in the 1790s, believed girls and boys should follow the same curriculum and thus read the same books. However, this was an unusual view and it represents the most progressive end of the broad spectrum of opinions on the subject.

## History and Language

An important aspect of a 'curriculum' is a suggested group of subjects to read. While 'genre' is usually used in a literary sense rather than an education context, it will be used here interchangeably with the words 'subject', 'topic', 'category' or 'discipline', to emphasise the relationship between curriculum and recommended reading. Genres were flexible which makes an analysis of bibliography by subject difficult. In general, the girls' curriculum had a greater number of recommended subjects. However, as the boys' curriculum was classical, writers could group suggestions for ancient languages, history, politics and philosophy together. In order to make sense of a potentially endless list of genres and book titles, I have chosen to focus on guidelines for history, languages, religion,

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<sup>69</sup> In her *Letters on education* she wrote, 'A mind, irradiated by the clear light of wisdom, must be equal to every task which reason imposes on it. The social duties in the interesting characters of daughter, wife, and mother, will be but ill performed by ignorance and levity; and in the domestic converse of husband and wife, the alternative of an enlightened, or an unenlightened companion cannot be indifferent to any man of taste and true knowledge.' Macaulay, *Education*, p. 49. A unisex curriculum would also mean that women would be better educators of children, especially boys. See Cohen, 'The mother'.

<sup>70</sup> Macaulay, *Education*, p. 50.

novels, science and philosophy, the subjects debated most, particularly in relation to gender.<sup>71</sup>

Writers recommended history reading for both boys and girls.<sup>72</sup> Bluestocking writer and philanthropist, Hannah More, wrote that history would teach a girl to ‘trace effects to their causes, to examine the secret springs of action, and to observe the operation of the passions’.<sup>73</sup> History, according to Francis Brokesby, was ideal for boys to read ‘as it tends to discover the methods of God’s Providence in the World in punishing Sin, and rewarding Virtue’.<sup>74</sup> Hannah More also thought history would teach girls about Providence.<sup>75</sup> The study of history was beneficial, according to the *Spectator*, for encouraging readers to feel compassion for others. Historical figures were more likely to elicit the reader’s sympathy than fictional characters.<sup>76</sup>

Famous historical works appeared on a number of reading lists. Erasmus Darwin recommended Charles Rollin’s *Ancient History*, originally published in Paris between 1730 and 1738, as prescribed reading for a girls’ school in Ashbourne, Derbyshire.<sup>77</sup> Rollin’s *History* was also recommended for girls by Chapone, Macaulay and David

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<sup>71</sup> The subject of history, as discussed here, will include geography and biography. Science will include mathematics.

<sup>72</sup> See D.R. Woolf, ‘A feminine past? Gender, genre, and historical knowledge in England, 1500- 1800’

*The American Historical Review*, 102 (Jun., 1997), pp. 645-679.

<sup>73</sup> Hannah More (1745-1833) famously aligned herself with the evangelist movement. S. J. Skedd, ‘More, Hannah (1745–1833)’, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19179>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote came from H. More, *Strictures on the modern system of female education*, vol. I (London, 1799), pp 175-176.

<sup>74</sup> Providence meant the foreknowing and protective care of God (or nature, etc.); divine direction, control, or guidance. ‘providence, n.’, *OED Online* (Oxford, March 2012) accessed 28 May 2012. <<http://oed.com/view/Entry/153450?rskey=0S1FdQ&result=1&isAdvanced=false>>. A trust in divine providence was central to Protestant belief in the period, and many of the readers discussed in this thesis alluded to it in their diaries. This quote comes from Brokesby, *Education*, p. 22.

<sup>75</sup> More, *Education*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>76</sup> *The Spectator*, no. 397, 5 June 1712, vol. 6 (London, 1713) p. 11. D.R. Woolf has argued that history was considered a study that would entice girls away from the frivolous reading of novels. See Woolf, ‘A feminine past’.

<sup>77</sup> Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), was a physician and natural philosopher. He helped his daughters create a boarding school and his *A plan for the conduct of female education, in boarding schools* (London, 1797) contained his public guidelines for the school. M. McNeil, ‘Darwin, Erasmus (1731–1802)’, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7177>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. His catalogue of recommended books suggested Rollin on p. 121.

Fordyce, and in a suggestion for boys by George Croft.<sup>78</sup> According to Caroline Winterer, one of the four favoured books of American women immersed in a world of classicism in the late eighteenth century was Rollin's *Ancient History*.<sup>79</sup> Besides Rollin's history, writers promoted Plutarch's *Lives*; it appeared on Darwin's list and in Catharine Macaulay's recommendations, for example.<sup>80</sup> History was part of the curriculum for both boys and girls.

Writers recommended ancient and modern history, along with the study of geography and biography. Sarah Trimmer, a prolific and successful children's writer found on both boys and girls lists, featured in Darwin's list with her histories of England, Greece and Rome, along with Oliver Goldsmith's histories of Greece, Rome, England and Scotland. Catharine Macaulay recommended reading history starting with Rollin. The study of Greek history was to begin when the student had learnt Greek, and then he was to read the history of Modern Europe.<sup>81</sup> Geography was also a recommended subject for girls and boys. New methods of geography cards, maps, and biographical charts were integral to the teaching of these disciplines in this period.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, history was considered both a source of learning and amusement.<sup>83</sup> One writer wrote in 1760 that, 'of all the different kinds of reading, there is none that can afford more profitable instruction, or more delightful entertainment

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<sup>78</sup> Chapone, *Improvement*, p. 183; Macaulay, *Education*, p. 129; D. Fordyce, *Dialogues concerning education* (London, 1757), p.138. David Fordyce (bap. 1711, d. 1751) was a writer on education. His *Dialogues* were an immediate success and applied the values of the Enlightenment to education. A. Ruston, 'Fordyce, David (bap. 1711, d. 1751)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9877>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. George Croft (1747-1809) was a Church of England clergyman and writer. P. B. Nockles, 'Croft, George (1747-1809)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6715>, accessed 10 Mar. 2012]. Rollin's *Ancient History* also appeared on p. 37 of Croft's *A plan of education* (London, 1784).

<sup>79</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of antiquity*, p. 26.

<sup>80</sup> Darwin, *Education*, p. 121; Macaulay, *Education*, p. 130.

<sup>81</sup> Macaulay, *Education*, p. 130.

<sup>82</sup> Shefrin, 'Adapted for and used in infants' schools, nurseries &c.': booksellers and the infant school market', in Hilton and Shefrin, *Educating*, pp. 163-180.

<sup>83</sup> D.R. Woolf suggests that history was recommended to girls to draw them away from the attractions of novels in 'A feminine past'.

than that of history'.<sup>84</sup> History, including geography and biography, was fundamental for the education of both boys and girls.

The studying of language, on the other hand, was applied differently to the genders.<sup>85</sup> Boys were encouraged to read the ancient languages of Greek and Latin, as well as Hebrew, whereas girls' language instruction centred on French and Italian. Erasmus Darwin's modern language recommendations for girls' included the story of Telemachus read in both French and Italian.<sup>86</sup> Readers interpreted this didactic novel by François Fénelon based on the adventures of Odysseus' and Penelope's son as a critique of the French monarchy. It was hugely popular, particularly loved by Rousseau. Winterer has found that American women enjoyed reading Telemachus.<sup>87</sup> Novelist and poet, Clara Reeve recommended Telemachus in her list of 'Books for Young Ladies' appended to *The Progress of Romance* in 1785, as did Fordyce.<sup>88</sup> Catharine Macaulay prescribed the book for young people as well.<sup>89</sup> Darwin's recommendation of this popular novel in both French and Italian indicates the importance placed on the perfection of languages skills for girls. An enjoyable book would be more likely to capture the imagination of its reader and thus serve as a more successful vehicle for delivering language ability. French and Italian were paramount to girls' education, but not for boys who learnt Greek and Latin. Hannah More said women should always remember 'the just remark of Swift, "that after all her boasted acquirements, a woman will, generally speaking, be found to possess less of what is called learning

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<sup>84</sup> [Charles Allen], *The polite lady; or, a course of female education* (London, 1760), p. 133.

<sup>85</sup> See Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity*, for a more detailed discussion of the creation of a national English masculinity formed in the late century in opposition to the effeminate language of the French and women.

<sup>86</sup> Darwin, *Education*, p. 121.

<sup>87</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of antiquity*.

<sup>88</sup> In the work by Clara Reeve, *The progress of romance*, Reeve defended the public utility of the novel. G. Kelly, 'Reeve, Clara (1729–1807)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23292>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012], C. Reeve, *The progress of romance, through times, countries and manners* (Colchester, 1785), p. 103; Fordyce, *Dialogues*, p. 138.

<sup>89</sup> Macaulay, *Education*, p. 130.



than a common school-boy”<sup>90</sup> ‘Learning’, in this context, meant the ability to read Latin. There were marked differences in ideas about the study of language and gender.

### **Pious Reading**

Piety was a fundamental requirement of ideal reading, regardless of denomination. Recent work on the history of religion has emphasised religion’s marriage to Enlightenment principles, despite earlier historiography that argued for a secularised Enlightenment.<sup>91</sup> Religious books and pamphlets comprised the largest section of the eighteenth-century publishing market in the long eighteenth century.<sup>92</sup> Didactic works among them contained exhortations for pious reading. William Law’s *A serious call to a devout and holy life* entreated men and women to make their souls ‘wise with reading’.<sup>93</sup> Dissenting minister and teacher, Philip Doddridge, advised students that, ‘if you study...trifle not with Mathematicks [sic], or Poetry, or History, or Law, or Physic (which are all comparatively light as a Feather)...Study the Argument (*Christianity*)...compare Evidences on Both Sides...And above all, consult the Genius of the New Testament’.<sup>94</sup> According to Doddridge, if one was going to do any studying or reading of anything, the most important texts to consult

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<sup>90</sup> More, *Education*, p. 169.

<sup>91</sup> For example, see J. Gregory, ‘Religion: faith in the age of reason’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34 (Dec, 2011), pp. 435-443; J. Sheehan, ‘Enlightenment, religion and the enigma of secularization: a review essay’, *The American Historical Review*, 108 (Oct, 2003), pp. 1061-1080.

<sup>92</sup> See I. Rivers, ‘Religious publishing’, in Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 579-600.

<sup>93</sup> William Law (1686-1761) was a devotional writer and nonjuror. He gained fame as the author of *A practical treatise upon Christian perfection* (1726) and *A serious call to a devout and holy life* (1729). I. Rivers, ‘Law, William (1686-1761)’, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Oct 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16154>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from W. Law, A.M., *A serious call to a devout and holy life* (London, 1729), p. 71.

<sup>94</sup> Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) was a dissenting minister and writer. I. Rivers, ‘Doddridge, Philip (1702-1751)’, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7746>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from P. Doddridge, *The rise and progress of religion in the soul* (London, 1745), pp. 97-98.

were those related to Christianity. Eighteenth-century religion absolutely demanded individual (and social) reading of religious texts, including the Bible. Moved by her commitment to evangelism, More wrote that women were to be educated as Christians. 'I repeat it', she wrote, 'there is to women a Christian use to be made of sober studies'.<sup>95</sup> The importance of piety for eighteenth-century reading lives cannot be underestimated.

While pious reading was universally prescribed, controversial religion was discouraged for girls and young women. At the end of Darwin's list of religious books, there was a note that controversial religious works should not be read by ladies. Likewise, John Gregory specifically requested that his daughters not read books that tended to shake their 'faith on those great points of religion which should serve to regulate' conduct. He said to go 'no farther than the Scriptures' and to avoid getting entangled 'in the endless maze of opinions and systems'.<sup>96</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, in her book on education for daughters, believed that 'books of theology' were inappropriate for young persons who were to be taught religion through example and the Bible.<sup>97</sup> This advice was echoed in the *Spectator*: 'Those who delight in reading Books of Controversie [sic], which are written on both sides of the Question in Points of Faith, do very seldom arrive at a fixed and settled Habit of it'.<sup>98</sup> The inconclusive nature of controversial religious books was the problem. Disputation might lead to unorthodox, and potentially heretical, views. Commentators did not prescribe such limitations to male readers. The category of 'divinity and controversy' appeared on a

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<sup>95</sup> More, *Education*, p. 166.

<sup>96</sup> John Gregory (1724-1773) was a physician and a writer. When his work *A father's legacy to his daughters* was published after his death in 1774, it was an immediate success. P. Lawrence, 'Gregory, John (1724-1773)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11468>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from J. Gregory, *A father's legacy to his daughters, by the late Dr. Gregory of Edinburgh* (Philadelphia, 1775), pp. 14-15.

<sup>97</sup> Wollstonecraft, *Education*, p. 53.

<sup>98</sup> *The Spectator*, no. 463, 23 August 1712, vol. 6 (London, 1713), p. 383.

boy's reading catalogue from 1752, for example.<sup>99</sup> Thus, some commentators believed controversial religious reading was more disruptive to certainty of belief in young women than in young men.

Religious practice was integral to educational ideology. All denominations encouraged pious reading under the correct circumstances, for men and women. John Wesley believed that reading was central to the life of a Methodist. However, he thought his people should be taught how and what to read.<sup>100</sup> Quaker women believed in educating themselves and others.<sup>101</sup> The legacy of 'Puritan' reading habits emphasised the importance of collective, social and public reading.<sup>102</sup> Bluestocking women, many associated with Anglicanism, were encouraged to combine piety with mental improvement in reading.<sup>103</sup> As will be discussed later in the case of Catherine Talbot, some intellectual women benefited from associations with Church of England clergy who encouraged their education and facilitated access to books. A high percentage of women writers were the daughters of clergymen, even into the nineteenth century.<sup>104</sup> All the men and women researched in this project moved within Anglican or dissenting circles which promoted pious reading.

Guidelines for pious reading were set in terms of space and time much more than the other genres of prescribed reading. In the seventeenth century, the closet was the site of private devotion. As the book of Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 6 stated, 'But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy

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<sup>99</sup> Anon., *Education of children and young students in all its branches, with a short catalogue of the best books in polite learning and the sciences* (London, 1752).

<sup>100</sup> I. Rivers, 'William Law and religious revival: the reception of *A serious call*,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71 (December 2008), pp. 633-649, p. 646.

<sup>101</sup> P. Mack, 'Religion, feminism, and the problem of agency: reflections on eighteenth-century Quakerism', in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 434-455.

<sup>102</sup> A. Cambers, *Godly reading: print, manuscript and puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>103</sup> N. Clarke, 'Bluestocking fictions: devotional writings, didactic literature and the imperative of female improvement', in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 460-473, p. 463.

<sup>104</sup> S. Staves, 'Church of England clergy and women writers', in Pohl and Schellenberg, *Bluestockings*, pp. 81-104, p. 88.

door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly'.<sup>105</sup> In the *Christian Oratory*, Benjamin Bennet wrote about the religious texts that were necessary in one's closet.

We should endeavour to have our Oratories, or Closets, furnish'd for all the Purposes of Devotion; I mean, with such Books as may be helpful to us in the several Parts of our Duty; as a Bible, a Psalm-Book, a Commentary, and Concordance, with other religious Tracts, both doctrinal and devotional, which, if well chosen, are certainly the chief Ornament of a Christian's Closet, and of greatest Use to him in his Work there.<sup>106</sup>

The necessary books to adorn one's closet were bibles, psalm-books, commentaries, concordances and other doctrinal and devotional tracts. This excerpt highlights print's central importance in individual spiritual practice within the closet. Closets were spaces for pious print consumption and reflection. Cambers has found that the closet of Lady Margaret Hoby was a space of 'morning prayer, self-examination and devotional reading'.<sup>107</sup> Karen Lipsedge has argued that there was an increase in closets in private domestic houses in the eighteenth century that depended in part upon the 'changing shape of English Protestantism' and an increase in literacy.<sup>108</sup> The closet was a central site of religious print consumption.

Pious reading was to take place daily in the morning after waking up and just before going to sleep. A daily, performative

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<sup>105</sup> King James Bible, Book of Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 6.

<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Bennet (c. 1674-1726) was a Presbyterian minister and writer. His most celebrated work was *The Christian oratory*. David L. Wykes, 'Bennet, Benjamin (c.1674-1726)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2100>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from B. Bennet, *The Christian oratory, or, the devotion of the closet display'd* (London, 1728), p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> Cambers, *Godly reading*, p. 51.

<sup>108</sup> K. Lipsedge, "'Enter into thy closet": women, closet culture, and the eighteenth-century novel' in J. Styles and A. Vickery, eds., *Gender, taste, and material culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (London and Yale, 2006), pp. 107-122, p. 111.

routine was essential.<sup>109</sup> Daniel Waterland, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, advised young students to:

Read a Chapter of the *Old* or *New Testament* (but oftner of the *New*) every Morning before you kneel down to pray: This will prepare you better for Devotion, and will take but little Time. Do the same at Night: Half an Hour may serve for each...and God will bless you the more for it; enabling you to become both a wiser and a better Man.<sup>110</sup>

Daily devotional reading was essential for spiritual growth. Routine represented constancy and dedication, and it allowed the pious reader to absorb spiritual texts fully, leading to the achievement of personal virtue and self-improvement. Masters and mistresses of households who were responsible for family religion were also encouraged to undertake familial readings of the scripture, both in the morning and evening. The author of the *Ladies Library* wrote that they were to:

See that constant Worship of God be maintain'd in their Families by daily Prayers, Morning and Evening, and by reading some Portions of the Holy Scriptures at those Times, especially out of the Psalms and New Testament; this is an absolute Necessity to keep alive a Sense of God and Religion in their Minds.<sup>111</sup>

Again, the consistency and daily habit were important. Readers were to study scriptures in the morning and the evening. This encouraged

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<sup>109</sup> See J. Champion, "'Directions for the profitable reading of the holy scriptures': biblical criticism, clerical learning and lay readers, 1650-1720' in A. Hessayon and N. Keene *Scripture and scholarship in early modern England* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 208-230, p. 211. This discusses the importance of annotations and reading carefully as well as weekly and monthly reviews of scripture read.

<sup>110</sup> Daniel Waterland (1683-1740) was a theologian and writer who created a detailed plan for a students' reading that was published as *Advice to a young student* in 1730. B. W. Young, 'Waterland, Daniel (1683-1740)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28815>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from D. Waterland, *Advice to a young student with a method of study for the four first years* (Cambridge, 1760), p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Anon., *The ladies library. Volume the second. Written by a lady. Published by Sir Richard Steele. Sixth Edition.* (London, 1751), p. 262.

a regular focus on Christianity during the first moments at the start of the day, as well as those at the end of the day. Advice writers prescribed spiritual books for all literate men and women. A number of these were popular devotionals and didactic literature, written by the clergy for the laity. One much reprinted devotional handbook by the Roman Catholic bishop, Richard Challoner, suggested that each day, one should spend a quarter of an hour reading the Scripture, or a spiritual book, and more time on Sundays and holidays. Heads of household were to discuss with parish officials which books were appropriate reading and to procure them for their families.<sup>112</sup> There is evidence here of the requirement for 'proper' books suggested by a member of the clergy. Pious reading of the right books every day, morning and evening, was the prescribed, performative routine from the clergy and conduct writers on religious reading in daily life. While religious controversy was restricted for female readers in education commentary, advice writers recommended devotional reading universally for women and men.

### **Imaginative Reading**

Imaginative literature, especially the novel, was the most problematic genre for female readers according to conduct and education texts. As covered extensively in the historiography, the reading of novels and romances received the most criticism from moralists.<sup>113</sup> Advice writer, Sarah Pennington, in particular, maligned novel-readership. She found novels and romances to be a waste of time. She conceded that some had good morals, but they were 'not worth picking out of

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<sup>112</sup> Richard Challoner (1691-1781), was a religious writer and vicar apostolic of the district of London. His work *The garden of the soul*, originally published in 1740, was a staple devotional work for Catholics living in England. S. Gilley, 'Challoner, Richard (1691-1781)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5025>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012] The above advice came from R. Challoner, *The garden of the soul: or, a manual of spiritual exercises and instructions for Christians* (Dublin, 1759), p. 192.

<sup>113</sup> Pearson, *Women's reading*. See Introduction chapter pp. 32-33 for discussion of Pearson's argument.

the Rubbish intermixed; 'tis like searching for a few small Diamonds amongst Mountains of Dirt and Trash'.<sup>114</sup> Novels could produce a 'romantic Turn to the Mind, that is often productive of great Errors in Judgment [sic], and fatal Mistakes in Conduct'.<sup>115</sup> Macaulay worried that novelists were unable to capture human nature accurately. She considered the unnaturalness of characters mentally damaging to the reader.<sup>116</sup> Like Hester Chapone, who suggested reading such works only with the guidance of good friends, Erasmus Darwin proposed that young women should only read some novels under the close observation of a governess.<sup>117</sup> Novels were to be handled with care, or avoided completely.

Hannah More was strongly opposed to women's reading and writing of novels. She said that the abundance of eager young women novelists was regrettable and that 'writing a book seems to be now considered as the only sure resource which the idle and the illiterate have always in their power'.<sup>118</sup> More's general disapproval of novels and novelists was striking, though she did make a footnote to acknowledge some novelists' 'real genius'.<sup>119</sup> More's negative views on novel readership and the circulating libraries were characteristic of commentators who judged literature according to intellectual hierarchies. As an educated woman herself, she looked down on novels and other 'frivolous' works that were considered unsubstantial and corrupting. More's perspective fits with Jacqueline Pearson's rendering of reading as a 'dangerous recreation' for women. More

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<sup>114</sup> Lady Sarah Pennington (d. 1783) was a writer whose life was tainted by scandal due to her self-proclaimed 'coquettish behaviour'. She is most known for her work, *An unfortunate mother's advice to her absent daughters*, which was part conduct manual and part memoir. E. Plaskitt, 'Pennington, Sarah, Lady Pennington (d. 1783)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74077>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from, S. Pennington, *An unfortunate mother's advice to her absent daughters, in a letter to Miss Pennington* (London, 1761), p. 39.

<sup>115</sup> Pennington, *Advice*, p. 40.

<sup>116</sup> Macaulay, *Education*, p. 143.

<sup>117</sup> Chapone, *Improvement*, p. 146. Chapone realised the enjoyment young people derived from novels, though she advised that they be read with care: 'I would be no means exclude the kind of reading, which young people are naturally most fond of; though I think the greatest care should be taken in the choice of those *fictitious stories*', p. 144. See also, Darwin, *Education*, p. 37.

<sup>118</sup> More, *Education*, p. 172.

<sup>119</sup> More, *Education*, p. 171.

thought 'English Sentiment, French Philosophy, Italian Poetry, and fantastic German imagery and magic wonders' would only lead women astray.<sup>120</sup>

Books of an opposite cast, however unexceptionable they may be sometimes found in point of expression; however free from evil in its more gross and palpable shapes, yet by their very nature and constitution they excite a spirit of relaxation, by exhibiting scenes and ideas which soften the mind; they impair its general powers of resistance, and at best feed habits of improper indulgence, and nourish a vain and visionary indolence, which lays the mind open to error and the heart to seduction.<sup>121</sup>

More thought novel reading was a lazy, indulgent habit that softened the mind and weakened its defences. Even if the content was apparently harmless, by a novel's very nature, it was damaging to the female mind. She considered them to be not intellectually rigorous, as well as promoters of vanity and unrealistic aspirations. At worst, they were corrupting and immoral. The 'spirit of relaxation' against which More warns suggests the passive/active dichotomy with which some historians have interpreted the history of reading. 'Passive' reading, whereby the reader behaves like a sponge, absorbing text uncritically, has often been associated with female readers as suggested by Lawrence Stone.<sup>122</sup> More also renders the 'spirit of relaxation' as a danger threatening women readers specifically, especially in their consumption of novels. The presumption that women readers read passively prevailed in conduct literature from the time, and consequently some historiography has reproduced such ideology as reality. This thesis shows repeatedly that the passive/active dichotomy did not characterise actual readership, and

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<sup>120</sup> More, *Education*, p. 164.

<sup>121</sup> More, *Education*, p. 166.

<sup>122</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 35. See also *Virtuous Reader* chapter in relation to John Brewer's analysis of Anna Larpent.



in fact, male and female readers employed a variety of reading modes, often influenced by emotions.

Criticisms of women's novel-reading were related to criticisms of the circulating library. In George Colman's play from 1760, *Polly Honeycombe*, a work highly critical of novel-reading, Polly's father proclaims in exasperation, 'a man might as well turn his Daughter loose in Covent-garden as trust the cultivation of her mind to A CIRCULATING LIBRARY'.<sup>123</sup> The association of whoring in Covent Garden with a library was one of the most damning condemnations of the growth of more public reading spaces in which women could participate. Along with the increase in accessibility of books for women, came an increase in vocal opposition to women's participation. This vociferous critique also assumed that all content within a circulating library was smut. Other critics were universal in their opposition to circulating libraries. The angry old man, Sir Anthony Absolute in Sheridan's play *The Rivals* (1775), raged that, 'A circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge!'<sup>124</sup> John Berkenhout, physician and author, wrote that, 'circulating libraries...have proved great enemies to literature. They have deluged the land with wretched novels, equally disgraceful to the writer, the publisher, and the reader'.<sup>125</sup> This complaint disparaged novels as the 'enemies of literature'. It suggested a widespread flood of 'disgraceful' books, which brought shame on all those involved in the communications circuit.<sup>126</sup>

Despite such attacks, there were also some positive appraisals of circulating libraries. In *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered* from 1797 the unnamed author wrote cheerily that, 'the prejudices entertained against Circulating Libraries, are every day losing ground; and nothing can be a greater proof of their utility, than the

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<sup>123</sup> G. Coleman, 'Polly Honeycombe', first performed 1760, published in *The dramatick works of George Colman, volume the fourth* (London, 1777), p. 58.

<sup>124</sup> R. Sheridan, *The rivals, a comedy. As it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden* (Dublin, 1775), p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> J. Berkenhout, *Lucubrations on ways and means* (London, 1780), p. 30.

<sup>126</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 26, for Darnton's definition of the 'communications circuit'.

great demand for books of late years, and the increase of those repositories of instruction and amusement'.<sup>127</sup> Once again, we find the positive appraisal of reading, that it could provide 'instruction and amusement'. The author of the *Tunbridge Wells Guide* from 1786 considered the circulating library to be a place where 'social virtues reign triumphant over prejudice and prepossession'.<sup>128</sup> Thus, there were at least two competing discourses about circulating libraries: one from satirical attacks and the other from advertising and commentary. Overall, there was more fear of the circulating libraries than approval in the literature surveyed, particularly because of their association with novels and women reading.

Novel-reading aroused the ire of many commentators of the time, but not all commentators were unbending critics. Some writers pointed out imaginative literature's positive attributes. Erasmus Darwin, for example, believed novels could be of great value to young women, because they could teach lessons on 'mankind' and provide knowledge of the men whom young women might marry. While Darwin did think too much novel-reading was a bad thing and anything too sentimental or amorous was to be avoided, he conceded some benefits. He said that almost all prose and poetry had at least a few objectionable passages in them—even Aesop's fables—and there was no sense in banning all literature. Readers could read works differently from how the author intended. Even innocent works could be misconstrued and found to be objectionable in some aspects, implying there was no way to control completely the reader's reception of a book.<sup>129</sup> He recognised that, 'in reading...the effect on the mind may frequently be totally different from that designed by the

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<sup>127</sup> Anon., *The use of circulating libraries considered; with instructions for opening and conducting a library, either upon a large or small plan* (London, 1797), pp. 3-4.

<sup>128</sup> J. Sprange, *The Tunbridge Wells guide; or an account of the ancient and present state of that place* (Tunbridge Wells, 1786), pp. 103-104.

<sup>129</sup> Darwin, *Education*, pp. 34-36.

author'.<sup>130</sup> Regulation of all imaginative literature was thus impossible.

Darwin recommended some novels for his plan of education for girls. His list included *Sandford and Merton*, *Adelaide and Theodore*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Evelina*, *Camilla* and *the Female Quixote*, among many others. Notably, Samuel Richardson's novels were absent. Regarding this, Darwin wrote that, even though De Genlis and Macaulay recommended the reading of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, he thought they were too lengthy for schools and contained 'objectionable' passages (Darwin did not explain why they were objectionable). Despite these limitations, Darwin's opinion of novel-reading appears to be on the more progressive side of cultural attitudes toward the genre. While accepting that novels should be read with guidance, in moderation and selectively, he also saw their educational benefit for teaching women about human character. Darwin was realistic in realising that even supposedly innocent works could be misread in an objectionable way, but for him, this was not a reason to forbid the genre altogether. If so, all poetry and polite literature would have to be banned. Of course, this was still a vision of restrained freedom to read novels and there was a sense in Darwin's advice that the genre could lead women astray. Still, Darwin's views have been emphasised here to counteract hegemonic claims within historiography that all commentators found novels to be unequivocally objectionable.

## Science and Philosophy

Commentators recommended different types of science for boys compared to girls. Significantly, some considered natural philosophy,

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<sup>130</sup> Darwin, *Education*, p. 35. This comment hints at a post-structuralist framework for the readers' power over the author. See Introduction chapter, pp. 28-29.

the study of nature and the universe, a precursor to physics, to be inappropriate for girls. Hester Chapone thought the subject ‘too wide’ for young women.<sup>131</sup> Some historians have suggested that there were limited opportunities for women to study physical sciences in the eighteenth century.<sup>132</sup> Ruth Watts argues that natural philosophy was associated with masculinity.<sup>133</sup> A 1752 boys’ catalogue contained a category called ‘Books of Natural Philosophy’, which included Derham’s *Physico-theology* and *Astro-theology*, Algarotti on *Light and Colours*, Fontenelle’s *Plurality of Worlds*, Hugen’s *Planetary Worlds*, Voltaire’s *Natural Philosophy*, Harris’s *Astronomical Dialogues* and Clare’s *Motion of Fluids*.<sup>134</sup> Extensive lists of natural philosophy were more likely to appear on boys’ lists than girls’ lists. However, there were some books in this category that appeared on both. William Derham was a theologian and natural philosopher whose work appeared on numerous lists of recommended reading for both boys and girls.<sup>135</sup> Clara Reeve recommended Fontenelle for girls.<sup>136</sup> David Fordyce recommended Francesco Algarotti for girls and a reading list


<sup>131</sup> Chapone, *Improvement*, p.136. She wrote, ‘Natural philosophy, in the largest sense of the expression, is too wide a field for you (*girls*) to undertake; but, the study of nature, as far as may suit your powers and opportunities, you will find a most sublime entertainment’.

<sup>132</sup> However, this position has been disputed by M. C. Jacob and D. Sturkenboom in their study of the Dutch eighteenth century women’s society, *Natuurkundig genootschap der dames*. M. C. Jacob and D. Sturkenboom, ‘A women’s scientific society in the west: the late eighteenth-century assimilation of science’, *Isis*, 94, (June 2003), pp. 217-252. See also L. Sarasohn, *The natural philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: reason and fancy during the scientific revolution* (Baltimore, 2010).

<sup>133</sup> R. Watts, *Women in science: a social and cultural history* (Abingdon, 2007), p. 62.

<sup>134</sup> In this period, natural philosophers were gentlemen whose virtue vouchsafed their empirical observations. See C. Kramer’s introduction to *Literature and science, 1660-1834, vol. I: science as polite culture* (London, 2003), p. xxiv, summarizing S. Shapin’s *A social history of truth: civility and science in seventeenth-century England* (Chicago, 1994). The titles listed above come from, Anon., *Education*, p. 30.

<sup>135</sup> William Derham (1657-1735) was a Church of England clergyman and natural philosopher. His works *Physico-Theology* (1713) and *Astro-Theology* (1715) were very popular and translated into other languages. M. Smolenaars, ‘Derham, William (1657-1735)’, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7528>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. Derham was mentioned in at least five of the education manuals I have studied, as well as in Dudley Ryder’s diary, as shown below in the Occupational Reader chapter, p. 126.

<sup>136</sup> Reeve, *Romance*, p. 104. Aphra Behn (1640?-1689) was a writer who translated Fontenelle into English in 1688. Janet Todd, ‘Behn, Aphra (1640?-1689)’, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1961>, accessed  28 May 2012].

for boys included this work as well.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, Algarotti wrote a work entitled *Newtonism for Ladies* (1737) that he intended to help young women studying natural philosophy. However, this field was still limited for women who were not welcome into its formal institutions within universities and societies such as the Lunar Society. Furthermore, Algarotti's heroine from *Newtonism for Ladies* was depicted as not very bright and incapable of doing mathematics.<sup>138</sup> Thus, while some degree of natural philosophy could be part of a prescribed curriculum for young women, participation within the field was not encouraged, partly because some saw the female mind as incompatible with strict scientific reasoning.

Writers did not recommend mathematics, as a subset of natural philosophy, to the same extent for boys and girls either. Clara Reeve and others writing on girls' education had little to recommend in the field of mathematics. Erasmus Darwin suggested nothing more than arithmetic.<sup>139</sup> Ruth Watts has noted that advice writers characterised mathematics as a masculine pursuit.<sup>140</sup> While mathematics was not a prescribed subject for girls, it was a subject growing in popularity for boys throughout the eighteenth century, as argued by Margaret E. Bryant. There was a transition from the traditions of Classical education, that included the 'learned and dead languages and...Aristotle's logic and metaphysics', to mathematical learning as a signifier of a good education.<sup>141</sup> Thus, maths was a developing field in the period but the female curriculum did not reflect the change.

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<sup>137</sup> Francesco Algarotti (1712-1764) was an Italian philosopher and writer, who was an expert in Newtonianism. He was recommended by Fordyce in *Dialogues*, p. 141 and J. Ryland, *An address to the ingenuous youth of Great Britain* (London, 1792), p. 4.

<sup>138</sup> Watts, *Women*, p. 71.

<sup>139</sup> Darwin suggested *Wingate's Arithmetic*, originally published in 1630. A. Bregman has called this work, 'the most important arithmetic in English in the first half of the seventeenth century', in which, 'Wingate betrays his great excitement about logarithms'. A. Bregman, 'Alligation alternate and the composition of medicines: arithmetic and medicine in early modern England', *Medical History*, 49 (July 2005), pp. 299-320.

<sup>140</sup> Watts, *Women*, p. 3.

<sup>141</sup> Bryant, *Secondary education*, p. 115.

Science recommendations for girls centred upon modern subjects as well as biology. The closest category to natural philosophy in Darwin's list was 'Arts and Sciences' and included works on botany, chemistry, mineralogy as well as a Ladies' Encyclopaedia. There were suggestions for attending lectures on astronomy, mechanics, hydrostatics and optics, as well as learning lessons on thermometers, barometers, clocks, watches and manufacturing. Some of these selections reflected trends in popular scientific study for women (as well as specific interests of Darwin's). Botany was becoming popular for women to study at this time, particularly inspired by the work of Carl Linnaeus.<sup>142</sup> Historically, women had long specialised in herbal medicine in the household.<sup>143</sup> By the eighteenth century, the field of botanical science was revolutionised through Linnaeus' publication of *Systema Naturae* in 1735.<sup>144</sup> This text exemplifies contemporary Enlightenment ideals of order and classification. There was another category in Darwin's list called 'Natural History'. It included works by Ellenor Fenn—*History of Quadrupeds* and *Rational Dame*—along with other titles such as Goldsmith's *Animated Nature* and *A Natural History of Beasts and Birds*. Thus, educationalists like Darwin believed life sciences and new sciences were more appropriate to young women readers than natural philosophy, even though Darwin himself was a natural philosopher.

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<sup>142</sup> Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) was a Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist who became famous for his classification system of all plants and animals. C. Grant has argued that botany was 'reconfigured as a polite activity compatible with female accomplishment, in works like Priscilla Wakefield's *Introduction to botany* (1796) and Charlotte Smith's *Conversations introducing poetry* (1804), associated with the education of children'. C. Grant, 'Introduction', *Literature and science, 1660-1834. Vol. IV: flora* (London, 2003), p. xi. See also, Watts, *Women*, p. 68.

<sup>143</sup> L. Knight, *Of books and botany in early modern England: sixteenth-century plants and print culture* (Farnham, 2009), p. 45, p. 88 and p. 134. Knight's interesting study on plant culture and print culture in early modern England successfully argues for a symbiotic relationship between the two. Regarding gender, she notes that women were some of the first to compose botanical verse. Furthermore, some of the first women to put their names to print wrote textual collections about herbs and flowers. Finally, household medicine and the use of herbs had traditionally been the preserve of women, who were more well-versed in such matters than university-educated physicians.

<sup>144</sup> See A.G. Morton, *History of botanical science: an account of the development of botany from ancient times to the present day* (London, 1981), pp. 232-361; V. Kaden, *The illustration of plants & gardens, 1500-1850* (London, 1982).

Philosophy, according to writers, was outside the appropriate realm of education for young women. *The Lady's Preceptor*, mentioned above, stated, for example, that 'philosophy...is a study without a lady's sphere'.<sup>145</sup> Darwin did not recommend Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism* because it was 'too abstruse for young ladies who might more easily improve their taste in respect to visible objects by frequently being shewn [sic] with proper remarks a select collection of the prints of beautiful landscapes, or of beautiful figures'.<sup>146</sup> Kames' *Elements of Criticism* sought to apply to each of the fine arts 'some remarks and observations drawn from human nature, the true source of criticism'.<sup>147</sup> Additionally, Lord Kames aimed 'to explain the nature of man, considered as a sensitive being, capable of pleasure and pain'.<sup>148</sup> Darwin believed that such explanations within Kames' book would be too confusing for girls to read. Girls would learn the art of criticism better through the study of beautiful imagery. Darwin prescribed visual interpretation as the preferred educational methodology for girls improving their sense of taste, rather than the digestion of complicated texts on criticism.

There was not a consensus on the restriction of philosophy from women. Hannah More suggested that women read, 'Watt's or Duncan's little book of Logic, some parts of Mr. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, and Bishop Butler's Analogy'.<sup>149</sup> Another catalogue for girls listed Watt's *Improvement of the Mind*.<sup>150</sup> However, Hannah More did not want to make 'scholastic ladies' and it was essential that pedantry was avoided.<sup>151</sup> Thus, while some reformist writers on education encouraged a degree of philosophical reading for

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<sup>145</sup> Ancourt, *Preceptor*, p. 61.

<sup>146</sup> Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782), was a leader of the Scottish Enlightenment, a judge and philosopher. A. J. Durie and S. Handley, 'Home, Henry, Lord Kames (1696-1782)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13643>, accessed 10 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from Darwin, *Education*, p. 122.

<sup>147</sup> H. Home, *Elements of criticism. In three volumes., Vol. I* (Edinburgh, 1762), p. 16.

<sup>148</sup> Home, *Criticism*, p. 17.

<sup>149</sup> More, *Education*, p. 164.

<sup>150</sup> Weightman, *Reasoner*, p. 80.

<sup>151</sup> More, *Education*, p. 123.

young women, there were stricter parameters than there were for young men.

### How to Read

The skill of reading aloud was one to practice and develop and educationalists stressed its importance, especially for young women. One writer wrote in 1775 about the necessity of reading aloud, saying that all the ‘passions of the soul’ had certain tones of voice and that ‘whatever passion a speech or sentence contains, it should always be read with its proper and natural accent’.<sup>152</sup> Wollstonecraft’s *The Female Reader* contained guidelines on elocution. She wrote that reading with propriety was a ‘desirable attainment: to facilitate this task, and exercise the voice, many dialogues have been selected’.<sup>153</sup> One was to practice reading aloud, assisted by the correct books.

Popular texts on elocution circulated in the period. Wollstonecraft’s *The Female Reader* was inspired by the well-known work on elocution by William Enfield, *The Speaker*. Enfield’s book was included on many reading lists, including suggestions by George Croft for boys, Clara Reeve for girls, Erasmus Darwin for girls and another list for girls, and it continued to be printed until the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>154</sup> Educationalists considered the practice of reading aloud a proper part of eighteenth-century education, and indeed, all the readers studied in the thesis participated in reading aloud socially, often within their family groups.

Another guideline for correct reading was to digest books fully. Mary Astell wrote that women should not trouble themselves, ‘in turning over a great number of Books, but take care to understand

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<sup>152</sup> Allen, *Education*, p. 141.

<sup>153</sup> Wollstonecraft, *Reader*, p. v.

<sup>154</sup> Enfield’s *Speaker* appeared in Croft, *Education*, p. 36; Reeve, *Romance*, p. 104; Darwin, *Education*, p. 123; Weightman, *Reasoner*, p. 77.



and digest a few well chosen and good ones...obtain right Ideas, and be truly acquainted with the nature of those Objects'.<sup>155</sup> Astell wrote that women readers should 'not Skim, but Penetrate to the bottom, yet so as to leave somewhat to be wrought out by the Reader's own Meditation'.<sup>156</sup> Lord Chesterfield likewise warned against reading too quickly and superficially.<sup>157</sup> It was necessary that a reader comprehended what she or he was reading fully, meditated on it, as well as committed the important parts to memory.

The process of extracting, that is the copying of excerpts from books, was advised as an educational method for digesting books and memorising. The practice of commonplacing had ancient origins and had evolved up until the eighteenth century, when it continued to be used as a technique for improving one's comprehension and digestion of text.<sup>158</sup> Lord Chesterfield wrote that it was necessary to keep a commonplace book.<sup>159</sup> Mark Towsey has suggested that the French pedagogue Charles Rollin was the first to recommend extracting as an integral part of a girl's education in early eighteenth-century France.<sup>160</sup> Extracting would require the use of a desk and ink as well as a diary, journal or commonplace book. Girls were meant to transcribe everything that they should commit to memory; extracting was to be used as a guide for virtue. Moral lessons copied down

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<sup>155</sup> Mary Astell (1666-1731), was a philosopher and promoter of women's education. Her first book, *A serious proposal to the ladies* (1694) established her as an intellectual and a writer. R. Perry, 'Astell, Mary (1666-1731)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/814>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from M. Astell. *A serious proposal to the ladies, for the advancement of their true and greatest interest. In two parts. By a lover of her sex.* (London, 1697), pp. 45-46.

<sup>156</sup> Astell, *Proposal*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>157</sup> Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), was a politician and diplomatist. One of his most well known publications was his series of 448 letters to his son. J. Cannon, 'Stanhope, Philip Dormer, fourth earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26255>, accessed 06 Mar. 2012]. The above quote comes from, P. Chesterfield, *Lord Chesterfield's maxims: or, a new plan of education* (London, 1793), p. 105.

<sup>158</sup> See Allan, *Commonplace*, passim, for a full history of the practice.

<sup>159</sup> Chesterfield, *Education*, p. 106.

<sup>160</sup> M. Towsey, "'Observe her heedfully": Elizabeth Rose on women writers', *Women's Writing*, 18 (2011), pp. 15-33, p. 23. See also, Goodman, *Letters*; J. Bloch, 'Discourses of female education in the writings of eighteenth-century French women', in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 243-258. Rollin demonstrated his method of extraction in *The method of teaching and studying the belles lettres, 4 vols.* (London, 1734).

would come to apply to the reader's life. Extracting was not conducive to reading in bed, even if done in the evening. John Wesley wrote that one should read an hour in the evening while practicing the method of extracting into blank books, suggesting that one would be working at a desk or table.<sup>161</sup> Extraction was considered an important component of correct reading habits.

In an educational context, the purpose of individual reading was for study. This meant that a quiet environment with the right equipment was necessary. If reading was mental work, one should read in a library or at a desk, rather in bed before falling asleep. For the strict, moralistic American preacher, Nathanael Emmons, reading was for 'Use and not for Amusement. The time is worse than thrown away, which is spent in reading for amusement, without any particular end or object in view'.<sup>162</sup> According to Emmons, reading was to be purposeful, implying that instruction and amusement were mutually exclusive. This ran counter to commentators mentioned above who suggested that the best reading was both instructive and amusing. The intended purpose of reading shaped guidelines for the reading environment. The physical dimensions of how and where one should study and read were topics common to educational guidelines and a few medical tracts. A F. M. Willich, M.D., in his *Lectures on Diet and Regimen* (1799), wrote about the correct placing of the desk for study:

A space sufficiently broad between two windows, is a still more convenient situation for a desk; but we should not sit too near a wall; a custom which is excessively hurtful to the eyes. An oblique position of the desk is most proper; for it presents to us the writing materials in that position, in which we are habituated to place a book, when we hold it in our hands, and

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<sup>161</sup> Anon., *The Methodist magazine for the year 1800 being a continuation of the Arminian Magazine first published by Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* (London, 1800), p. 466.

<sup>162</sup> N. Emmons, *The dignity of man. a discourse addressed to the Congregation in Franklin* (Providence, 1787), p. 38.

from which the rays of light diverge more gradually than from a horizontal table.<sup>163</sup>

Correct lighting, a distance from the wall and an 'oblique position' of the desk were important. Dena Goodman has written about the relevance of the writing desk in the history of women's letter-writing, discussing the many drawers and storage spaces for writing material as well as locked spaces for privacy.<sup>164</sup> However, the desk as a work space in relation to reading has been examined less. Contemporaries used the phrase 'reading desk' to refer to a pew in church from where prayers were read, but it also described a table used for general reading.<sup>165</sup>

## Conclusion

The authors studied above intended their recommendations to instil virtue and appropriate behaviour in youth that would continue into adulthood. While the readers explored throughout the rest of the thesis did indeed see their reading as a route to virtuous self-improvement, they did not admit to worrying that the wrong books would damage their virtue. For example, bluestocking women who had been educated in the Classics used this knowledge to foster public personas of patriotic and civil virtue in which the public considered their roles as intellectuals to be beneficial for the state. They did not shy away from reading Latin because it was not typically

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<sup>163</sup> A.F.M. Willich, M.D., *Lectures on diet and regimen: being a systematic inquiry into the most rational means of preserving health and prolonging life* (London, 1799), p. 654.

<sup>164</sup> Goodman, *Letters*, p. 200.

<sup>165</sup> J. Ash, *The new and complete dictionary of the English language. ... To which is prefixed, a comprehensive grammar* (London, 1775), p. 'REA'.

part of a female curriculum.<sup>166</sup> Republican Thomas Hollis, a fan of Plutarch's *Lives*, read and distributed works in line with goals of civic duty, using print as an enlightenment tool to spread philosophical and political ideas widely.<sup>167</sup> His books empowered him to circulate ideas and knowledge, without having to conform to the typical male role of political office-holding prescribed by educationalists designing the curriculum for young men. Anne Lister, a strenuous autodidact, used her reading of the Classics and Romantic novels as a way to further her romantic relationships.<sup>168</sup> She did not hesitate to read these genres even though they were a source of concern for commentators on women's reading.<sup>169</sup> Cultural rhetoric did not dissuade Anna Larpent from reading controversial theology and philosophy or expressing her opinion within the pages of her diary.<sup>170</sup> She applied reason to support her judgements of books read and used her diary as an informal book of literary review. Eighteenth-century reading lives were always freer, more varied and empowering than advice literature and education guidelines would suggest.

This chapter has investigated 'ideal reading' in the eighteenth century within the contemporary education context. The exploration of the qualities of virtuous reading was undertaken because education was meant to instil virtue in youth. Concepts of male virtue and polite breeding ranged from active public engagement, to familial duty, to sociability, and to competence and learning. Reading correctly would shape young gentlemen for public roles of governance. Women's reading in youth would prepare them for roles of motherhood and wifedom, but, importantly, reading was to be a source of well-rounded education, amusement, politeness and sociability. For both men and women, reading's potential to improve

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<sup>166</sup> See Bluestocking Reader chapter.

<sup>167</sup> See Philosopher Reader chapter.

<sup>168</sup> See Romantic Reader chapter.

<sup>169</sup> However, at times, Lister was discreet about her reading choices, highlighting the existence of public anxiety about the dangers of certain reading by women. See Romantic Reader chapter, p. 297.

<sup>170</sup> See Virtuous Reader chapter.

conversation skills was paramount. Sociability reliant on reading was a virtue for both sexes.

The analysis of the curriculum revealed a concern that men and women were reading the right books and subjects according to gender. There was considerable variation in cultural ideas on the curriculum, but some generalisations are possible. While history was universally required, language recommendations split between classical reading of Latin and Greek for boys and modern languages for girls. The classical reading recommended to girls was usually in translation. Pious reading was a necessary part of education for both boys and girls, but advice writers advised that girls avoid the reading of controversial theology. The routines and spaces of spiritual print consumption were part of an extensive commentary on proper reading by the clergy. Imaginative literature was the greatest concern for writers on girls' education. Novels and the circulating library were immoral and corrupting, according to commentators, though the rhetoric was not consistent from all. Natural philosophy was considered more suited to boys than girls, though some theological works of natural philosophy, such as those of William Derham, were prescribed to both. Writers proclaimed modern sciences, like botany, suitable to girls, while advanced mathematics was not. Meanwhile, according to many writers, profound philosophy was too complex for girls. Prescribed genres of reading within a curriculum varied according to gender.

Guidelines on reading techniques varied. However, in general, all readers were encouraged to read closely and thoroughly without skimming, in order to digest a text. Remembering one's reading was important for both sexes, and advice writers recommended the practice of commonplacing. This practice was appropriate for girls' education in particular. Additionally, reading aloud was a necessary discipline for both men and women through appropriate reading of dialogues and elocution books. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote specifically

to guide women readers in this respect. Reading aloud was a necessary accomplishment for young women as well as a source of polite sociability practised by both men and women in company.

The readers analysed in this thesis did follow methods recommended for proper reading practice such as reading aloud, commonplacing and in-depth print consumption. Dudley Ryder, early in the eighteenth century, for example, purposefully read to improve his ability in polite conversation.<sup>171</sup> However, readers also went beyond these guidelines and practised reading in a variety of settings and with a range of approaches. As will be shown, some read outside, while mobile, as well as to pass the time when travelling. Some read carefully and closely at times, while also skimming through books on other occasions. Readers did use the practice of extracting, but the style and format varied from reader to reader. Furthermore, diarists recorded a variety of activities in relation to their books: from quoting passages to copying title pages and coding important sections to listing books read or to be bought. Readers' behaviours in relation to their books were considerably diverse.

This chapter has offered an exploration of the relationship between education, virtue and civility in the context of the eighteenth-century reading experience; an in-depth analysis of major aspects of the contemporary curriculum; and a brief discussion of prescribed reading techniques of the time. Gender has been a useful category of analysis for comparing the different prescriptions for men and women. The study has found a multiplicity of views about ideal reading in an educational context as well as guidelines defined according to gender.

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<sup>171</sup> See Occupational Reader chapter on Dudley Ryder's reading for conversation, pp. 130-131.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Occupational Reader**

In a period when one's occupation was increasingly associated with education, training and long-term steadiness, eighteenth-century middling men relied on their books for success.<sup>1</sup> While many of the readers examined in this chapter displayed an interest in erudition and deep learning, specialist technical knowledge was believed to improve career prospects. Such reading was a form of 'knowledge acquisition', which achieved practical awareness of one's occupation and the wider world. The middling men studied were eager to collect books in a series, and the hobby of book collecting was integral to their reading habits. Such habits relied upon the consumption of religious texts, as well, which allowed men to practice their faith actively, enabling self-reflection based on Christian teachings. Reading often took place within a community of readers, such as book societies. Familial sociability included novel-reading practices. Underlying these print consumption habits, the money spent by these men on book collecting had to be regulated in order for male readers to achieve a balance between necessities, decencies and luxuries.

Many of the middling men studied here were dedicated to improvement in career, intellectually ambitious, devout, community-minded and economically cautious. Print consumption reinforced as well as facilitated these characteristics of eighteenth-century middling masculinity. Thus, it is possible to construct reading as essential to the performance of specific male gender roles. Elements of these roles were discussed in the previous chapter, particularly in the sections on how correct reading could equip a man to benefit the nation, especially in relation to

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<sup>1</sup> See P. Corfield, *Power and the professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London, 1995), p. 19; H. Barker, 'Soul, purse and family: middling and lower-class masculinity in

education, civility and Christianity. This chapter emphasises other aspects of men's reading, such as the interest in knowledge acquisition, sociability and antiquarianism, as well as novel reading.

This chapter sets out to show that books did four things. They provided learning as well as the knowledge necessary for skill in occupation. Books facilitated the religious practices that allowed men to make sense of the social world and their position within it. Reading enabled the sociability of print consumption that created community and familial ties. Finally, in the purchase and ownership of books, reading represented the importance of careful, balanced spending. The chapter also addresses men's reading of fiction.

### **Masculinity, Class and Reading**

The relationship between middling masculinity and reading lives in the eighteenth century has not been explored fully by historians. Penelope Corfield has investigated the 'mystery' claimed by the professions in the period, arguing that specialist knowledge allowed those in this group to command increasing power as the century progressed.<sup>2</sup> As Hannah Barker has shown with her study of middling and lower-class men in eighteenth-century Manchester, a man's occupation was one way he defined himself and one way he was defined by others. Barker emphasises the experience of self-hood and the subjective experience of being male.<sup>3</sup> Through an analysis of seven male diaries, this chapter will explore how these men used books to shape a career, as well as their social and familial life. This chapter builds on Barker's assertion that masculinity in the eighteenth century was not a

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eighteenth-century Manchester', *Social History*, 33 (February, 2008), pp. 12-35, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Corfield, *Professions*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Barker, 'Masculinity', p. 13.



complete break from what came before, which saw the emergence of the polite 'modern' man largely defined by the public sphere. Instead, it suggests that eighteenth-century masculinity was also characterised by a dedication to home, religion and occupation as it was in earlier periods.<sup>4</sup> The work here demonstrates the instances in which public politeness and the 'domesticated Christian man' interlinked, markedly in their reading practices and book choices.

An analysis of the personal diaries of Edmund Harrold (1679-1721), John Cannon (1684-1743?), Dudley Ryder (1691-1756), James Woodforde (1740-1803), Matthew Flinders (1751-1802), John Marsh (1752-1828), and Syllas Neville (1741-1840) creates a revealing case study of the reading habits of a social spectrum of middling men, varying from lower-tradesmen to professionals throughout the long eighteenth century. The investigation deals with readers who lived at various times through the century, while the following chapters will contain case studies of readers analysed chronologically. This chapter outlines many of the themes that appear throughout the thesis, hence its position near the beginning.

The group contained in the chapter ranges from a Manchester wigmaker, Harrold, to the young law student Ryder, who went on to become attorney general, to the bachelor Parson Woodforde. While it might be tempting to arrange these men in a middling hierarchy of wealth and status, that would miss the nuances of their individual social, economic and even familial positions. For example, would we place John Cannon, the excise officer and conscientious memoirist higher or lower than the composer, musician and father, John Marsh? If we could recover their financial net worth this would go some way to determining social hierarchy, but it is never the case in any society that people judge others by financial earnings alone. Money was indeed a

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<sup>4</sup> Barker, 'Masculinity', p. 13.

marker of social worth, but eighteenth-century society valued title and family name, sometimes as much or more than the cache of money, which contemporaries could consider vulgar. At the same time, deportment and appearance were means by which to judge a man's worth. The historiography on politeness attests to the value placed on good breeding.<sup>5</sup> All of these men can be defined, very broadly, as the middling sort.

The middling male readers explored here fit together as a sample because their print consumption reveals common masculine characteristics that override their differences in career. Within the group there is a range of occupations, regional diversity and an urban and rural mixture. Matthew Flinders was a lower-middling apothecary and male midwife in a Lincolnshire village. John Marsh was a musician and writer working within the cathedrals and churches in the towns and cities of the southern counties. James Woodforde was a country parson in Norfolk. Syllas Neville was a pronounced Whig, a 'man about town', and a little-practicing physician in Norwich and Edinburgh. Dudley Ryder was a law-student in London. Edmund Harrold was a wigmaker in Manchester. Finally, John Cannon was an excise Officer and writing master from Somerset.<sup>6</sup> All the men studied exhibited discernible traits of eighteenth-century middling masculinity.

Definitions of the 'middling sort' have taken various forms over the past two decades. Recent work on the 'social and administrative milieu' on parish administrators such as Richard Gough, has brought us closer to understanding how contemporaries saw themselves in society.<sup>7</sup> Hannah French has explored two groups of parishes in Lancashire and Essex between

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<sup>5</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter, on politeness, pp. 69-71.

<sup>6</sup> For more on Neville's career see, H. W. Meikle, 'Review: medical student life at Edinburgh University in the eighteenth century', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 31 (Apr. 1952), pp. 76-79.

<sup>7</sup> H. French, 'Social status, localism and the "middle sort of people" in England 1620-1750', *Past and Present*, 166 (Feb, 2000), pp. 66-99, p. 73.

1620 and 1750. She focused on shared values within middling groups. According to French, these values were diametrically opposed to the genteel statuses identified by Peter Earle, though her study finds that parish power-holders did exhibit varying degrees of gentility.<sup>8</sup> This supposed divide between gentility and the middling sort can be bridged by the cases considered in this chapter. Indeed, Earle pointed out that the distinction between the 'upper part of mankind' and the 'middle station' was becoming increasingly confused in the period.<sup>9</sup> Amanda Vickery has found that polite society in Lancashire included minor gentry, professional and mercantile families.<sup>10</sup> She concludes that the crucial distinction was 'between genteel commerce and retail trade, between the polite and the vulgar', rather than simply between land and trade.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, geographical identities defined by nationalism, regionalism and localism affected how the 'middling sort' perceived themselves and others. Within French's study of parish power-holding in Essex and Lancashire, it was revealed that 'the most prevalent manifestation of a common "middling" social perception was the tendency to cast personal status in restricted local terms...(and) local hierarchies'.<sup>12</sup> Dynastic families built up social status over time within restricted county territories: such status was often not recognised outside these boundaries.<sup>13</sup> Historiography in this field has developed especially in the 1990s, alongside studies on cultural consumption.<sup>14</sup> Thus, research into shared social values, geographical identity and the consumption of culture have influenced definitions of the middling sort.

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<sup>8</sup> P. Earle, *The making of the English middle class: business, society and family life in London, 1660-1730* (London, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Earle, *Middle class*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> French, 'Middle sort', p. 98.

<sup>13</sup> A. Mitson, 'The significance of kinship networks in the seventeenth century: south-west Nottinghamshire', in C. Phythian-Adams, ed., *Societies, cultures and kinship, 1580-1850: cultural provinces and English local history* (Leicester, 1993), pp. 24-76.

The context of domestic family life will also be addressed in this chapter. Married men and single men's reading lives differed because shared family reading dictated some reading patterns. The print culture of single men, particularly those like Neville and Thomas Hollis (discussed in the next chapter), who spent much time reading in coffee houses and in conversations with friends and like-minded thinkers outside of the home, was specific to their single status. Of the seven men studied in this chapter, four (Flinders, Cannon, Harrold and Marsh) were married at the time of their diary-keeping. Ryder's diary only covers a few years before he got married, and Neville and Woodforde never married. Familial reading could be one significant aspect of a man's reading life.

### **Access to Books and Genre Range**

Books were widely accessible to the sampled group of literate men. While most did not have large private libraries, they did collect books, as well as buy, borrow, share and trade. Edmund Harrold certainly would not have had a big library, but he did buy books and was involved in a lively book trading business in the early eighteenth century. Marsh shared books within his book and library societies in the 1780s and 90s, as well as owned his own books. In the same period, Matthew Flinders bought books, and then sold them back in a variation on book trading similar to Harrold's practices. Woodforde, an active consumer, spoke of book purchases. His inventory at death valued his 'library' at £30.<sup>15</sup> While Neville collected books, particularly when a student in Edinburgh, he struggled with debts and it is unlikely that he would have had been sufficiently solvent to maintain a substantial library. Finally, Ryder as a young man, had access to the dissenting libraries of Hackney and then the libraries of University

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<sup>14</sup> H. Berry and J. Gregory, *Creating and consuming culture in north-east England, 1660-1830* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 2.

of Edinburgh and the Middle Temple in the 1700s and 1710s. The easy accessibility of books for such men represents again the daily presence and fundamental relevance of reading for the middling and gentry.

This chapter will show that the men studied were diligent and disciplined when it came to occupational reading. They chose varied genres and approaches conscientiously for the attainment of specific goals. These goals would benefit upstanding men within a community that favoured expertise (along with traditional scholarship), piety, sociability and financial steadiness. For example, Dudley Ryder was steeped in classical reading and he even outlined a plan for his reading that was based on a daily schedule, allocating different times for different genres. He reserved the 'polite authors' who would teach him his 'own style and...a good habit of thinking and speaking', for just before bed because they were most likely to keep him awake. He included 'plays, romances, poetry, essays and anything of wit or humour or imagination' in this genre.<sup>16</sup> These genres were used as entertainment, as well as an aid to self-polishing. While he intended to dedicate his mornings to constant study of the law, Ryder planned to read the 'Roman authors' after dinner till 5 or 6 o'clock and from that time till bed, English history, followed later by the polite authors as mentioned.<sup>17</sup> He described this as his plan, but we do not know whether he followed it. Still, the plan shows where his priorities lay, how he categorised his reading, and how he intended to structure his day around print consumption. Particular types of print consumption were to take place at specific times of the day, representing a diligent routine of print consumption.

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<sup>15</sup> Blythe, *Parson*, p. 410, editor's appendix.

<sup>16</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 219, 13 April 1716.

### **Scholarship, Knowledge Acquisition and Politeness**

For each of the men surveyed here, training for a career relied on the reading and absorption of the appropriate books. According to Corfield, 'learned tomes stocked the cumulative wisdom of the experts'.<sup>18</sup> Prescriptive reading lists for the professions existed with titles such as *Murray's Catalogue of Books, in Medicine, Surgery, Anatomy, Natural History &c., for the use of Faculty and Practitioners in General* (1785), by John Murray, *A List of Books Recommended to the Younger Clergy, and other Students of Divinity, within the Diocese of Chester* (1792), by William Cleaver and *Bibliotheca legum: or, a compleat list of all the common and statute law books of this realm...* (1768) by John Worrall. Some of the men studied here described reading titles found on these lists. For example, Syllas Neville studied at the University of Edinburgh when Dr William Cullen was a lecturer, and wrote of taking notes of Cullens' reports.<sup>19</sup> John Murray recommended Cullen's Lectures. Eighteenth-century professionals, including those studied here, relied on specialist texts to train for and sustain their careers.

These male readers used their diaries to record books read that improved their knowledge and skills within their occupation. James Woodforde took his deacon's orders at Oxford in 1763. He wrote of having to know the fifth chapter of St. Paul's letter to the Romans in his examination by Mr. Hewish.<sup>20</sup> In 1761 he said he had to read the first Books of Hutchinson's Moral Philosophy and give a summary account of them for his examination.<sup>21</sup> Dudley Ryder's training in the law depended on extensive reading of a multitude of volumes. He filled his diary with endless references to books read and his related thoughts, including those read as

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<sup>17</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 219, 13 April 1716.

<sup>18</sup> Corfield, *Professions*, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> NRO, Neville, MC7/2, pp. 10-11, 18 July 1774.

<sup>20</sup> Blythe, *Parson*, p. 12, 23 May 1763.

training for his law degree. For example, on 3 October 1715 he 'read some of Perkins' Law concerning deeds'.<sup>22</sup> A week later, he read some more of Perkins, though he complained that he could not remember it.<sup>23</sup> The reading of law books was necessary for Ryder's education, and his remark about forgetting some of it reflects the requirement of law students to absorb and digest their reading.

For those not in the traditional professions, the reading of specialist texts on one's trade throughout a career was necessary to keep up to date with changes in the field as well as to provide continuing training. Though details on Matthew Flinders' training as an apothecary are unclear, the books he chose to read later provided awareness of the most current medical knowledge available. He listed purchases of 23 issues of the *Medical Magazine* between January 1775 and October 1776. By 1777, he had taken up a new periodical, the *Medical Commentaries*. He wrote in December of that year, 'I have to note that I have discontinued the Medical Magazine and take the Medical Commentaries in its stead, this being but half the expence and containing only new matter, whereas that consists principally of old & almost useless writings'.<sup>24</sup> From the 1750s onwards, medical professionals consulted specialist journals, which included Dr Andrew Duncan's *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries* (1773-95), as mentioned here by Flinders.<sup>25</sup> Such journals meant that Flinders kept informed of all medical developments, particularly those related to midwifery. He described the journals in terms of 'use'. In October 1785 Flinders bought a work on midwifery called *A treatise of midwifery* by Alexander Hamilton (1739-1802). Specialist reading related to

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<sup>21</sup> Blythe, *Parson*, p. 6, 15 June 1761.

<sup>22</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 113, 3 Oct. 1715.

<sup>23</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 116, 10 Oct 1715.

<sup>24</sup> Beardsley and Bennett, *Flinders*, vol. I, p. 58, 15 Dec. 1777.

<sup>25</sup> Corfield, *Professions*, p. 139.

Flinders' trade were useful for maintaining occupational competence.

Different types of reading necessary to buttress a man's career were defined by varied notions of scholarship, professional training and education.<sup>26</sup> An excerpt from Syllas Neville's diary demonstrates the nuances of expected professional reading. After struggling with debts in London, Neville made his way to medical school at Edinburgh University in 1770s. He worked hard to finish his degree and enjoyed the academic life. Neville had an appreciation for classical learning while training for his medical profession. He complained about the fact that the Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, was not a classical scholar and said, 'I own I am at a loss how a man can be a Physician and Professor without classical learning'.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Linnaeus did have a classical education, but he did not dedicate himself to those subjects prescribed to him: Greek, Hebrew, theology and mathematics.<sup>28</sup> From a young age, Linnaeus demonstrated a keen interest in botany and he would go on to become one of the most influential figures in the field of natural history to this day, particularly famous for his taxonomic system. Neville's criticism of Linnaeus is interesting because it represents the traditional understanding of scholarship that involved studying the ancients. New subjects, especially new sciences like botany, were not recognised as scholarship. Neville still valued traditional definitions of scholarship, rating such learning as a necessary component of professional training.

The meaning of 'scholarship' had diverse interpretations. Even though most of Linnaeus' early professors decided that he would never be a 'scholar', one professor disagreed and suggested

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<sup>26</sup> See J. Champion, 'Enlightened erudition and the politics of reading in John Toland's circle', *The Historical Journal*, 49 (Mar., 2006), pp. 111-141; J. Champion, "'To know the edition": erudition and polemic in eighteenth century clerical culture', in D. Hayton and M. McCarthy, eds., *The making of Marshes' library* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 117-45.

<sup>27</sup> Cozens-Hardy, *Neville*, p. 203, 22 June 1773.



he could have a future in medicine.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it was considered that the field of medicine, one of the three recognised professions in the eighteenth-century, required scholarship. Neville understood his medical education as dependent upon ‘classical learning’. His comments illustrate distinctions and relationships between categories of learning and training for professional men. Reading necessary for one’s professional training, in this instance, still required scholarship.

Neville’s concern about Linnaeus’ lack of classical learning highlights further the contemporary debate surrounding erudition, extensive reading of the classics, and reading to acquire knowledge. Justin Champion has explored the concept of erudition in relation to the learning of John Toland.<sup>30</sup> He explains that Toland’s ‘deep’ reading was considered an indication of ‘his serious learning’ by some, while others derided this claim to learning, complaining that Toland had not really digested the texts he studied.<sup>31</sup> How one read as well as what one read was thought to determine the successful attainment of learning. Reading mode and context also affected reading’s ability to equip a man for his career. While Neville had a particular expectation of reading necessary for professional training, there was not a consensus on ideal reading for men, demonstrated also in the case of Toland. In some respects, a change occurred in the eighteenth century when key education writers such as John Locke denounced scholars who locked themselves away in dusty universities removed from society.<sup>32</sup> This ‘deep learning’ represented an older form of reading that was changing, as writers for *The Spectator* and other polite publications advocated a more well-rounded, practical approach

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<sup>28</sup> W. Blunt, *Linnaeus: the compleat naturalist* (London, 2004), pp. 16-17.

<sup>29</sup> Blunt, *Linnaeus*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>30</sup> J. Champion, *Republican learning: John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1696-1722* (New York, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Champion, *Toland*, p. 191. See also A. Grafton, *What was history? The art of history in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 251, for more information on the Republic of Letters and ideas on the limits of erudition.

to education, a worldly acquisition of knowledge. Many of the reading preferences of the middling men analysed here represent the new eighteenth-century focus on polite and broad learning, as well as specialised study for one's career. Therefore, reading for one's occupation was conceptualised within debates about what constituted proper education for genteel men. For those in the trades without a university education, new notions of polite and worldly learning could distinguish men as participants in 'genteel commerce'.<sup>33</sup>

Book collecting was another feature of some of the male reading lives considered here. Neville keenly collected reading material to study in order to improve his degree in medicine. Physicians featured prominently as book collectors in the eighteenth century.<sup>34</sup> These collections included antiquarian works as well as classical texts and objects. For example, the library of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), famous doctor and collector, still exists and includes books, manuscripts, natural history specimens, antiquities, coin, medals and prints, now owned by the British Library.<sup>35</sup> Neville's manuscript diary for 1774 while he was at the University of Edinburgh shows him in search of reports and publications to build his collection of medical works. He went to great lengths to borrow copies of notes from other students, as well as books. He was particularly eager to obtain the Clinical Reports of one of the medical doctors and professors at Edinburgh, Dr James Gregory (1753-1821). In July he wrote, 'I have now all the Clinical Reports for 3 years which I believe few at the university can boast of'.<sup>36</sup> This comment reveals a sense of pride in the collecting of reading material, as well as a sense of public display. Having all the Clinical Reports was

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<sup>32</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter for criticism of isolated deep learning within universities, pp. 71-72.

<sup>33</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> R. Landon, 'Collecting and the antiquarian book trade', Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 711-722, p. 713.

<sup>35</sup> Landon, 'Collecting', p. 713.

something to 'boast of' amongst colleagues, and revealed a level of public worth. The theme of reading as a status symbol runs throughout this thesis. Even though Neville valued scholarship, he took pride in his collection of career-specific texts. For the professional men studied here, the display of knowledge acquisition through the collecting a series of the same work, could be a public symbol of learning.

An appreciation of the genteel arts could also define the reading lives of middling men. While there seems to be no surviving evidence that Marsh, the 'gentleman composer',<sup>37</sup> read books to improve his specialist musical knowledge, it was evident that he was involved in a literary community that encouraged the readership of *The Analytical Review* (1788-1799) and *The European Magazine* (1782-1825).<sup>38</sup> These publications concerned themselves with poets and artists respectively. Cultural review was valuable for a man who immersed himself in a world of music. Marsh took many outings to the theatre and mentioned a multitude of plays listed in his bibliography of books read. He recorded purchasing 'Shakespear's [sic] plays neatly bound in 8vo for 12s. Pope's works and sev'l other books at a cheap rate' at an auction in Romsey in the mid 1770s.<sup>39</sup> In the 1760s, he obtained Moliere's plays in French and English in 10 vols.<sup>40</sup> Marsh read a range of plays including contemporary and older works, as well as comedies and tragedies. It is significant that Marsh, the composer and musician, was a cultural consumer of books relating to poetry, art and theatre. Such reading befitted a prolific composer living in the so-called 'urban renaissance'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> NRO, Neville, MC 7/2, p. 12, 18 July 1774.

<sup>37</sup> The 'Gentleman composer' was part of Robins' title for his edited version of Marsh's diary.

<sup>38</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 453, 1789.

<sup>39</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 129, 7 May mid-1770s.

<sup>40</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 36.

### Useful Reading: Law Books

Reference books consulted by the eighteenth-century male readers studied here represent worldly engagement. The *vita activa* relied on practical books about the functioning of contemporary society.<sup>42</sup> For example, for many of the men surveyed, law books were essential reading, even when they did not directly reinforce an occupation. In the following excerpt from May 1778, Matthew Flinders remarked upon his purchase of law books:

As I was not possessed of a single Law Book, I thought the most usefull [sic] ones I could purchase would be Burn's Justice, which I have just got, in 4 volumes octavo. These contain a summary of the whole English Law, & any particular is easily referable to: they are rather expensive, but quite necessary to every Man who would wish to know any thing of the Laws whereby he is governed.<sup>43</sup>

Flinders' decision to buy a book on law shows a commitment to know the legal world around him. He talked about the book in terms of utility and reference. Perhaps this also suggests Flinders' understanding of an Englishman's legal liberties that one had to understand in order to defend. Flinders described the books as 'necessary'. As Wilfrid Prest has shown, lay law books were a publishing staple in the eighteenth century.<sup>44</sup> Burn's *Justice* was a leading example, according to Prest, along with a title with an even wider potential readership, *Every man his own lawyer: or, a summary of the laws of England in a new and instructive method*

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<sup>41</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 43

<sup>42</sup> See Introduction chapter for historiography on the *vita activa* and masculinity, p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> Beardsley and Bennett, *Flinders*, vol. I, p. 66, May 1778. According to the editors, 'Burn's Justice' was *The justice of the peace, and parish officer*, by Richard Burn (1709-85), first published in 1776. This was the 'standard reference work for JPs of the time'.

<sup>44</sup> W. Prest 'Law books', in Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 791-806, p. 798.

(1736, 10<sup>th</sup> edition 1788), which promised that ‘all Manner of Persons may be particularly acquainted with our Laws and Statutes’.<sup>45</sup> The appeal of law books for the ‘every man’ like Flinders demonstrates the requirement for *vita activa*, that men would understand English common law.

The growth in production and appeal of law books represented the increased power of lawyers in the period. Dudley Ryder was one such eighteenth-century lawyer who recorded reading works by Sir Edward Coke and John Perkins. This education could prepare him for success in the legal field. As Corfield has noted, ‘with the abolition of the royal prerogative courts in the seventeenth century, there was a surge in the quantity and range of business entrusted to the common lawyers’.<sup>46</sup> It has been argued that the introduction of defence lawyers in the courts around 1730 improved prisoners’ rights and initiated a fundamental change in the legal system.<sup>47</sup> This change created increased work opportunities for lawyers. The eighteenth century also saw the rise of the barrister, such as the sarcastic Sir William Garrow (1760-1840). Suarez has found that the genre within which the greatest number of books was published in 1793 was ‘politics, government and law’.<sup>48</sup> The amount of men involved in law as a profession increased in this period as did the rates of publishing and the reading of law books.

The importance given to reading landmark law texts is represented by examples of male readers practicing ‘intensive reading’.<sup>49</sup> The musician John Marsh mentioned reading two famous contemporary texts: ‘The day after this being the last of the year, I managed to finish reading Blackstone’s Commentaries

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<sup>45</sup> Prest, ‘Law’, p. 799.

<sup>46</sup> Corfield, *Professions*, p. 70.

<sup>47</sup> J. M. Beattie, *Crime and Courts in England, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>48</sup> Suarez, ‘Bibliometric’, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> See Introduction chapter for discussion on ‘intensive’ versus ‘extensive’ reading, p. 30.

& Goldsmith's *History of England*, both for the 2d. time over'.<sup>50</sup> *Blackstone's Commentaries* was a highly influential law treatise of the eighteenth century and was a leading work in the development of English common law. It went into many editions and was 'popularised by countless handbooks throughout the English-speaking world'.<sup>51</sup> It is notable that Marsh mentioned reading it for the second time. Indeed, repeat-reading has been found in other case studies of this thesis.<sup>52</sup> Repeat-reading in this instance emphasises a commitment to digest fully the law treatises. Full digestion of a text based on thorough reading represents one form of learning in which one read 'deeply'. Advice books encouraged readers not to skim. Erudition meant that a text had been understood completely, and had transmitted its intended purpose to the reader. Marsh's close reading of *Blackstone's Commentaries* demonstrates his intention to understand completely the leading work on law in the eighteenth century. The middling men studied here valued the reading of law as a means for achieving the *vita activa*, knowledgeable engagement in the world around them.

### **Useful Reading: Geography and History Books**

The male readers in this chapter considered books on geography to be another genre necessary for understanding and engaging with the wider world. Matthew Flinders, the apothecary and male midwife, read geography, which he considered necessary. For example, in 1785 he received his order for 'Hervey's Geography' and wrote:

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<sup>50</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 190, 31 December 1778.

<sup>51</sup> Corfield, *Professions*, p. 72.

<sup>52</sup> See *Bluestocking Reader* chapter on Catherine Talbot's repeat reading, pp. 206-208, as well as *Virtuous Reader* chapter on Anna Larpent's repeat reading, p. 243. There was nothing to suggest that repeat readers studied here were a distinct 'type' of reader, but rather that they employed repeat reading of certain books that they considered of considerable value, whether for education or enjoyment. They were more likely to read books considered less important a single time.

I this day received this elegant Work in 2 Volumes Folio, illustrated with Maps and Prints, price £3 8s 0d. I hope it will answer expectation, and be a fund of entertainment and instruction. I chuse [sic] to have the whole together rather than take it in the 122 Nos proposed. I hope it will preclude the necessity of purchasing any Voyages or Travells, [sic] or any other publications in Geography, indeed it is very expensive & ought.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, Flinders considered a comprehensive geographical work a necessity. He decided that ordering the text as a whole, despite its expense, would negate the need to purchase any other geographical work. Again, we can see how book selection and purchase revealed a desire for active involvement in the world. His use of the phrase ‘a fund of entertainment and instruction’ also reveals the value placed on the marriage of amusement and instruction in the consumption of print. As already mentioned, books were considered most educational when they were amusing and instructive.<sup>54</sup> Matthew Flinders believed geography was required, as well as enjoyable, reading.

The men studied here thought that a geographical awareness, an engagement with one’s wider social, political and physical surroundings, was necessary. As Yolande Hodson has noted that, ‘the period between 1690 and 1830 was marked by five major wars, the loss of the colonies in North America, the development of the British empire in India and the exploration in the South Pacific...(which gave rise to increasing) cartographic expression in a variety of forms’.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Matthew Flinders’ own son was famous for mapping the coast of Australia, as well giving the continent its present-day name. He was first inspired to go to

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<sup>53</sup>Beardsley and Bennett, *Flinders*, vol. II, pp. 18-19.

<sup>54</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter on eighteenth-century on ‘instructive and amusing’, p. 74.

<sup>55</sup> Y. Hodson, ‘Maps, charts and atlases in Britain, 1690-1830’, Suarez and Turner, *Book*, pp. 762-780, p. 762.


see after reading *Robinson Crusoe*.<sup>56</sup> The middling male reader of maps and other geographical works followed and celebrated global developments, understanding such knowledge in terms of necessity.

Besides geographical pursuits, antiquarian interest in local history within Britain was thriving.<sup>57</sup> Between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, the antiquarian book trade developed, appealing to a new group of book collectors.<sup>58</sup> Flinders wrote of acquiring a work called the *British Traveller*:

I forget wether [sic] I remark'd my taking in a work under the above title—to be compleated in 60 N<sup>os</sup> I have got about half of them...it is neat in its appearance and an ingenious compilation and the plates and Maps numerous & some of them decent—my principal inducement was a compleat [sic] collection of County Maps.<sup>59</sup>

Flinders said that he desired a complete collection of county maps. He admired the work's appearance for its neatness, suggesting the desirability of aesthetic qualities in books for eighteenth-century readers. The aesthetic pleasure of books is a theme pursued throughout this thesis.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, in the same way that Syllas Neville desired to acquire all the medical reports by a particular doctor, Flinders was keen to collect all county maps. His intentions demonstrate that the collecting of

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<sup>56</sup> Matthew Flinders (1774-1814) was a naval officer and hydrographer. J. K. Laughton, 'Flinders, Matthew', rev. Andrew C. F. David, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9750>, accessed  30 June 2012].

<sup>57</sup> See R. Sweet, *Antiquaries: the discovery of the past in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 2004).

<sup>58</sup> Landon, 'Collecting', p. 712.

<sup>59</sup> LA, Flinders 2, Feb. 1785.

<sup>60</sup> See Philosophical Reader and Virtuous Reader chapters for more on material aesthetics of books.



informative print and manuscripts was a hobby for some middling literate male readers pursuing the *vita activa*.

The evidence of book collecting is an important aspect of male print consumption, particularly as many men tried to create a niche collection on a specific topic.<sup>61</sup> It furthers arguments about the importance of the book as object. The desire to own a complete collection of a certain publication could have been a way to display financial or social success through book ownership. Similarly, a niche collection on a particularly topic could convey a specialist interest, that one was a 'scholar-collector'.<sup>62</sup> However, a narrow focus could also suggest pedantry, or eccentricity, an unfavourable characteristic in polite company, particularly in a period that favoured well-rounded accomplishment. Both male and female eighteenth-century readers had to regulate the public display of their reading habits according to such social conventions.<sup>63</sup> Book collecting could be an admirable habit of the middling male reader hoping to improve as well as show off his knowledge of wider social and physical processes, but too much of a narrow focus could lead to the critique of pedantry, as was the case somewhat with Thomas Hollis.<sup>64</sup>

Most the middling men studied here valued and enjoyed useful, knowledge-rich texts. The wigmaker Edmund Harrold paid instalments to read *The Compleat Geographer: or, the Chorography*

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas Hollis' attitude toward books was the most telling example of this. See Philosophical Reader chapter. Another example was Neville's collection of clinical reports, and here we find Flinders desiring a 'compleat collection of County Maps'. According to Isobel Grundy, few of the leading book collectors were women, though a surprising number did obtain substantial personal collections. Grundy, 'Women', p. 148.

<sup>62</sup> Landon, 'Collecting', p. 712. For further reading on book collecting see G. Mandelbrote, 'The organization of book auctions in late seventeenth-century London', in R. Myers, M. Harris and G. Mandelbrote, eds., *Under the hammer: book auctions since the seventeenth century* (London, 2001), pp. 15-50; S. De Ricci, *English collectors of books and manuscripts (1530-1930) and their marks of ownership* (Cambridge, 1930); R. Myers and M. Harris, eds., *Property of a gentleman: the formation, organization and dispersal of the private library, 1620-1920* (Winchester, 1991).

<sup>63</sup> Though the nature of social convention varied due to gender, as shown throughout the thesis.

<sup>64</sup> See Philosophical Reader chapter, p. 151.

*and Topography of all the known Parts of the Earth* (1709).<sup>65</sup> He also read history, such as Richard Knolles (1550-1610), *The Turkish History, from the Original of that Nation, to the Growth of the Ottoman empire* (1687).<sup>66</sup> Harrold was moved by the history of the principality of Orange and remarked that the persecution of Protestants by Lewis the 14<sup>th</sup> made his 'heart ake [sic]'.<sup>67</sup> While these books did not relate to his profession directly, they kept him abreast of the wider world and its processes.

Some middling men credited 'useful' genres explicitly for enabling their success in their occupations and social standing. John Cannon, the excise officer, enjoyed history reading from a young age. His literacy allowed him to move from a life of agricultural labour to the excise office. Cannon said that as a child he took more pleasure in reading history than in any other pastime.<sup>68</sup> In his diary, he wrote about 'useful' knowledge, rather than deep learning and pedantry. Cannon explained education in terms of good-breeding, describing virtuous learning and the necessity for politeness. He said that learning should not be self-centred, but rather, 'a light to guide us to virtue, to know ourselves & the world...knowledge of itself is rude if it be without art...'tis not enough that the understanding be cleared, but the will also must be regular, and much more the manner of conversing'.<sup>69</sup> Cannon was adamant about the importance of useful knowledge, saying:

Any artisan whatever, if he knew the secret and mistery [sic] of his trade may truly be called a learned man & the usefulest [sic] sort of learned men. For without them we might want the necessary accommodations of life &

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<sup>65</sup> Horner, *Harrold*, p. 39, 13 Oct. 1712.

<sup>66</sup> Horner, *Harrold*, p. 98, 21-25 Dec. 1713.

<sup>67</sup> MRCL, Harrold, M567, Owen MSS Vol. 12 p. 155, 30 July 1712.

<sup>68</sup> Money, *Cannon*, p. 29, 1698, diarist's pages: 32-33.

commerce with other nations, by which this island grows wealthy at home and formidable abroad, & such ought to be preferred with respect to the subsistence of a country before the polymathists that stand poring all the day in a corner upon a motheaten author and converse only with dead men.<sup>70</sup>

He mentioned the word ‘mistry’ explicitly and described tradesmen as ‘learned’. They were more ‘usefull’ to Britain than the ‘polymathists’ who pored over books and did not converse. Once again, the dusty, pedantic business of classical scholars was spurned in favour of a more proactive, commercial and patriotic approach to broad learning and conversation. Cannon believed strongly in the power of reading as a way to earn his way in the world. As a self-taught apprentice on a farm in West Lydford, Somerset who worked his way up to the excise office by 1720, Cannon saw his books as key to his success. According to his own accounts of his youth, amidst his ‘rural Employments [sic]...the greatest yet of all’ were his books.<sup>71</sup> He wrote in his diary that ‘everyman...is the builder of his own fortune’.<sup>72</sup> Near the beginning of his diary he stated that, ‘Socrates says that knowledge and ignorance are the origine [sic] and the beginnings of good & evil’.<sup>73</sup> Cannon exemplified the eighteenth-century ‘self-made’ man, raised up in the world through his own efforts to gain ‘useful’ knowledge.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> According to the editor, Money, this comes from ‘Joseph Addison’s famous manifesto on philosophy, tea tables and coffee-houses in *Spectator*, no. 10’. Money, *Cannon*, p. 28 1697, diarist’s pages: 30-32.

<sup>70</sup> Money, *Cannon*, p. 28, 1697, diarist’s pages: 30-32.

<sup>71</sup> SHC, Cannon, DD/SAS/C1193/4, p. 47.

<sup>72</sup> SHC, Cannon, DD/SAS/C1193/4, p. 62.

<sup>73</sup> SHC, Cannon, DD/SAS/C1193/4, p. 31.

<sup>74</sup> See Susan Whyman on John Cannon’s autodidacticism. Whyman, *Pen*, p. 82.

## Pious Reading

Print consumption provided a religious foundation for readers in the eighteenth century. Barker has written about the importance of the 'soul' for middling men, and Jeremy Gregory has focused on the 'homo religiosus' model of masculinity, celebrating the man who was forgiving and magnanimous, but also actively engaged in the world (*vita activa*) rather than in retreat (*vita contemplativa*).<sup>75</sup> Religious reading was also a social activity undertaken within the family unit or local community.<sup>76</sup> In the case studies discussed here, men's pious reading was a way of contemplating their faith as it applied to the world.

The amount of spiritual reading the men mentioned in their diaries varied. Surprisingly, Parson Woodforde spoke little about his personal spiritual reading, though he often mentioned performing his professional duties for the Church of England related to preaching and the reading of prayers in the second half of the century. Edmund Harrold, also Anglican, referred to his religious reading and contemplation of spiritual subjects the most. Of Sherlock's *Death and Judgement*, he declared, 'I like it very well'.<sup>77</sup> On 1 July 1712 he wrote:

This day work hard, read a litle of B[isho]p Hall Invis[ible] World.<sup>78</sup> Ive hard tryalls [sic] and provocations but I hope

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<sup>75</sup> See my Introduction chapter for more on 'homo religiosus', p. 54. Gregory, 'Homo religiosus', pp. 85-110.

<sup>76</sup> Jeremy Schildt has written about reading the bible in seventeenth-century England. He finds that 'reading was a goal-orientated pursuit that inculcated a diligent and active piety'. His study focuses on bible readers within the domestic milieu, while also examining the 'social life of the godly community'. J. Schildt, 'Eying and applying and meditating on the promises: reading the Bible in seventeenth-century England', unpublished doctoral thesis, London, 2008, p. 206.

<sup>77</sup> Horner, *Harrold*, p. 10, 22 June 1712. See R. Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England, 1480-1750* (London, 1998), p. 62 and pp. 66-7. *A practical discourse concerning death* (London, 1689) and *A practical discourse concerning a future judgement* (London, 1689) were the most popular of W. Sherlock's works.

<sup>78</sup> Joseph Hall (1574-1656) was bishop of Norwich, a religious writer and a poet. Harrold refers to the popular devotional and contemplative tract, *The invisible world* (1652) written just before Hall's death. According to R. A. McCabe, this was an 'informative soteriological treatise'. R. A. McCabe, 'Hall, Joseph (1574-1656)', *ODNB*

will asist [sic] me to overcome, but thus it will be not only to me, but certainly has been to others with me and before me and to all yet comes after me into this state of probation. But I find yt if I do not leave God first he will not have me according to his holy word, in sure as stedfast [sic] faith, of which I keep close to my rules in generall, [sic] and when I break ym, I put it down, day and date and all to humble my soul with etc.<sup>79</sup>

Here Harrold explained that he hoped to overcome his troubles by keeping a focus on God. He described one's time on earth as 'probation', before the afterlife when God might not 'have' him 'according to his holy word'. Harrold had set rules in order to stay faithful and he resolved to write down any infractions in his diary. He suffered a guilty conscience about his drinking habits and used his reading as a form of penitence that would teach him to stop his sinful ways. Harrold mentioned reading Sherlock often. William Sherlock (1639/40-1707) was a famous Church of England clergyman and author in the seventeenth century.<sup>80</sup> Sherlock's practical work on divinity addressed to a broad Christian audience, *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death* (1689), argued that, as humans were naturally inclined toward pleasure-seeking, a Christian life was justified. One was to forego immediate pleasures of the flesh in order to look forward to an eternal lifetime of pleasure in heaven. Harrold admired this text because it reminded him of the need to spurn his immediate pleasures of drink and sex, in order to enjoy a fruitful afterlife. Pious reading for similar men was therefore a way to reflect on daily activities in light of their religious beliefs.

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(Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11976>, accessed 04 Nov. 2011].

<sup>79</sup> Horner, *Harrold*, pp. 14-15, 1 July 1712.

<sup>80</sup> W. E. Burns, 'Sherlock, William (1639/40-1707)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004)  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25381>, accessed 04 Nov. 2011].

Middling men wrote that pious reading reminded them to lead dutiful and conscientious lives. Harrold wrote, 'I stayed at home al [sic] day and night Reflecting on my past life and how I must do to amend Read Taylor & Sherlock & Norris ye 21<sup>st</sup> condem'd me together with my own Conscience'.<sup>81</sup> He explained that the authors he read 'condem'd' him along with his own conscience, meaning he was judged by the authors he read. This demonstrates that pious reading for Harrold acted as a 'second conscience'.<sup>82</sup> Christian texts served to remind him of his transgressions and the requirement for self-reformation. Together, reading and writing were acts of self-reflection, remonstrance and guidance. Religious books made up the majority of Harrold's print consumption and seem to have aided in the productivity he was able to achieve when not suffering from drunkenness. He said that the best way to spend one's time was in 'reading, praying and working, for ye devils always busie [sic] wth ye idle person leading him to lust, drunkenness etc'.<sup>83</sup> When his mind was calm and he was not suffering from a guilty conscience, he wrote that he could carry out his work more easily. He thanked God in these instances for keeping him in his 'duty'.<sup>84</sup> Harrold believed that his pious reading enabled him to remain dutiful and productive.

Genteel and polite men relied on pious reading as a source of betterment in their lives. Dudley Ryder, a truly polite reader who used his books to master himself in the public world, contemplated his faith through his reading. His educational background in nonconformity kept him in touch with dissenting as well as other religious authors of the day. Ryder read plenty of sermons and religious tracts and used them to reconcile his love of worldly respect and admiration with religious devotion. On Sunday 1 July 1716, he read a work by John Flavel, the

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<sup>81</sup> MRCL, Harrold, M567, Owen MSS Vol. 12, p. 161, 1 Sept. 1712.

<sup>82</sup> See *Virtuous Reader* chapter, p. 266.

<sup>83</sup> Horner, *Harrold*, p. 37, 2 Oct. 1712.

<sup>84</sup> MRCL, Harrold, M567, Owen MSS Vol. 12, p. 165, Sept. 1712.

Presbyterian divine. He pondered upon reading it how one could persist in 'sin and neglect', while recognising that worldly temptations made such a 'deep impression' on himself. In other words, he understood that sinful living was a slippery slope, knowing he was too often attracted to potential sins. Ryder said that he could not 'grow indifferent about it' to 'lay aside an inordinate affection of it (*sins of this world*)', hoping that 'only the assistance of the spirit of God is promised' to his own endeavours.<sup>85</sup> He read William Derham's *Astro-Theology* and beseeched God to 'impress this great truth, the sense of Thy being and continual presence with us' upon his soul, that it would influence his 'whole life'.<sup>86</sup> 'Oh, never let the world and things of sense be so powerful and strong as to deface Thy image in my heart or drive away the sense of Thee from my mind', Ryder wrote in his diary.<sup>87</sup> Ryder aspired to excel as a man in the world, tempted by material worries. According to his own records, he believed that his religious books forced him to value humility and to know that God should be primary over worldly concerns. Such men believed that pious reading would assist them to succeed in their short-term and long-term goals.

Some male readers considered their diary-writing practices to be integral to performative piety.<sup>88</sup> Harrold mentioned recording the days and times of his transgressions, as discussed above. The excise officer John Cannon justified his chronicle-writing project in biblical terms as a talent given by god. Growing up in the Restoration Anglican church, he used his diary to honour the 'holy penmen' of the bible, who were:

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<sup>85</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 266.

<sup>86</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 275. This work was recommended often in the reading lists analysed in the Ideal Reader chapter. This is an example, therefore, of a common prescription that was adopted by some readers in real life. As suggested, other religious guidelines related to time and space were followed in practice by readers, especially in the case of Anna Larpent. See Virtuous Reader chapter.

<sup>87</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 275.

<sup>88</sup> See Introduction chapter on the pious diary, pp. 23-24.

Very copious of their lives & actions, their temperance & simplicity. But above all in their way of living, their constant resignation unto the Will of the great Creator is wonderfully admired. This ought to be the Christian's directory & patern [sic] for our imitation to a virtuous life....And if God's grace and our friends has bestowed on us a talent of learning or any occupation, let us improve the same by leaving a faithful memorial to our posterity.<sup>89</sup>

Cannon talked of being resigned to God's will as well as the godly duty of diary-writing as a record, a 'faithful memorial', of one's god-given talents.<sup>90</sup> He went on to criticize the man in the biblical anecdote who buried his talents in the ground.<sup>91</sup> Cannon saw himself as one blessed with a talent for chronicling his memoirs, as well a general talent for learning. He strove to live up to his self-proclaimed potential, seeing his life as one destined for greatness, in accordance with the will of God.

This belief in a spiritual affirmation of his actions and purpose, points to a providential understanding of the world and Cannon's position within it. His god-given role, as he perceived it, thus required studiousness (the 'talent for learning') and the will to write autobiographically. Cannon filled his diary with reflections on his reading and studies, hoping that his chronicles would be published one day. The recording, practice and display of reading took on religious significance. For many of the occupational men studied here, religious reading provided a spiritual lens through which to view one's life in relation to others and in relation to career. These men believed that pious reading contained models for behaviour. Cannon spoke of 'paterns' [sic] and 'imitation'. Thus, religious books did not just structure daily routine, regulate

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<sup>89</sup> Money, *Cannon*, p. 6, diarist's page 5.

<sup>90</sup> This implies that he believed in Providence. For 'providence' definition, see Ideal Reader chapter, p. 77.



thought and inspire reflection, they were also instructive, in the minds of men keen to advance themselves in the world as well as live dutifully within their social circles, familial, friendly and occupational.

Performative religious practices for the sampled group of men relied on conversations about Christian reading, communal worship and awareness of biblical teachings. The politically-minded Sylas Neville attended sermons on Sundays, took notes in bibles, conversed with ministers, and recorded sermon content in his diary in the 1760s and 70s.<sup>92</sup> He attended many sermons by Caleb Fleming, a dissenting minister whom he greatly admired, at Pinnars Hall in London.<sup>93</sup> He also went to sermons each Sunday whilst staying in Filby, sometimes commenting on the notes he took down into his bibles.<sup>94</sup> In 1768 Neville recorded the biblical chapter and verse that formed the basis for a particular sermon, as well as his summary of the message, writing, 'Mr Fleming preached a curious & excellent sermon from I John iii. 8. He does not think that the beings of a superior order, who fell, are suffered to influence men or make their probation more difficult. If they were, the fault would be theirs rather than man's'.<sup>95</sup> Here Neville was alluding to the 'fallen' angel, Satan, also described in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Religious piety was not just a private ritual; it was also a public, sociable practice sustained through widely read and understood religious texts.

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<sup>91</sup> Parable of the Talents in the Bible, Book of Matthew, Chapter 25, verses 14-30 and Book of Luke, Chapter 19, verses 12-27.

<sup>92</sup> Neville religious practice also coexisted with his interest in politics. He wrote of reading the poem, *Eleutheria*, written by William Robertson (1705-83), a theological writer, who, according to Neville, had 'given up his benefices in Ireland, because he could not hold them consistently with the principles of Liberty'. Cozens-Hardy, *Neville*, p. 34, 8 June 1768.

<sup>93</sup> Caleb Fleming (1698-1779) was a dissenting minister and radical Whig who believed Sir Robert Walpole's government had betrayed the cause of the 1688 revolution. He was a close friend of Thomas Hollis in the 1760s. G. M. Ditchfield, 'Fleming, Caleb (1698-1779)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9695>, accessed 21 Mar. 2012].

<sup>94</sup> Cozens-Hardy, *Neville*, p. 105, 23 June 1771: 'Mr Walker preached at Filby, Prov. xxi. 26 last clause. Wrote a few notes in one of my Bibles'.

<sup>95</sup> Cozens-Hardy, *Neville*, p. 35, 31 July 1768.

### **Reading Lives and Male Sociability.**

Male sociability relied on conversation, which contemporaries believed was strengthened by correct reading habits.<sup>96</sup> Readers selected certain genres, like history, to improve and polish verbal ability. While much history writing was digested for practical knowledge, learning, worldly awareness or simply for enjoyment, as explained above, men also read it to buttress their conversation skills.<sup>97</sup> The reading of history books signified interest in human society throughout time, along with a sense of political change. History fascinated the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment: historical works dominated the print production of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>98</sup> These history writers, like David Hume, also promoted the benefits of competent conversation skills, improved through reading, as a progressive force in society.<sup>99</sup>


Like history, recent political tracts were vital reads if one wanted to maintain the polite appearance of respectability and social awareness. In the early 1790s, Marsh the composer expressed his thoughts on Thomas Paine, saying, 'Paine's Rights of Man, or Answer to Burke being now lately come out & much talked of, we got it in our society & on Monday the 25<sup>th</sup> I began reading it, but was much disgusted with the author's treason, impudence & scurrility'.<sup>100</sup> Readers in this period would have been

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<sup>96</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter on conversation. p. 70.

<sup>97</sup> D.R. Woolf, *Reading history in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 80. Woolf argues that history reading was meant to be socially circulated in conversation.

<sup>98</sup> R. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the book: Scottish authors & their publishers in eighteenth-century Britain, Ireland & America* (London, 2010), p.704.

<sup>99</sup> David Hume (1711-1776), was a philosopher, historian and member of the Scottish Enlightenment. In *Essays, moral and political* (Edinburgh, 1741) he wrote of conversation's 'use' to society, particularly when it was improved by the study of history. J. Robertson, 'Hume, David (1711-1776)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14141>, accessed  21 Mar. 2012].

<sup>100</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 492, Apr. 1791. T. Paine, *Rights of Man* (1791). Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was a writer and revolutionary, particularly influential in the American War for Independence. M. Philp, 'Paine, Thomas (1737-1809)', *ODNB* (Oxford,

familiar with the *Rights of Man*, particularly as it was so controversial. Paine defended the French Revolution's legitimacy, asserting that revolutionaries had acted in response to a repressive regime that did not guarantee the rights of French people. Paine wrote the tract in response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), an attack on the instigators of the overthrow. Readers followed the situation in France closely in England. They observed developments across the channel warily, fearing similar turmoil in Britain. Others initially saw the uprising as a positive indication that democratic action was the way to preserve human rights. However, as violence increased and the revolt turned into an anarchic bloodbath, some early supporters began to doubt the revolution's benefits. The rhetorical battle between Burke and Paine represented public conflict of opinion in print. As Marsh said, Paine's work had 'lately come out & (was) much talked of'. Marsh favoured the Burkean argument, which is not surprising, as many considered the Paine tract radical. Awareness of political debate suggests that reading facilitated participation in conversations about the political and social world.

The men studied here sometimes credited books specifically for improving conversation skills. The lawyer Dudley Ryder enjoyed books that discussed manners and sociability. In July of 1716 he wrote that he 'began a little book concerning conversation where in I design to collect whatever matter of conversation occurs to me and read it over often. Read some *Nouveau Voyage to the Levant*, wherein there are several things worth remarking, which I wrote down in my book for conversation'.<sup>101</sup> In the next month, Ryder described that he, 'read law till past 11 when read some *Spectators*. There are abundance of very just remarks upon

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2004); online edn, May 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21133, accessed  1 July 2012]

<sup>101</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 286, 31 July 1716.

human nature and the customs and manners of people. Read also in some Travels to the Levant and took notes of some things that would be proper for conversation'.<sup>102</sup> In the first instance, Ryder created a book in which he would record material appropriate for conversation, taken from his reading. He found the *Nouveau Voyage to the Levant* a very useful work and took notes to use at a further date. The noting down of texts read to improve social skills was central to Ryder's goals for sociability.<sup>103</sup> The practice of commonplaceing, the copying down of excerpts from one's reading to use in one's writing, studying or conversing, had a long history in European history, beginning as early as late antiquity.<sup>104</sup> Commonplace books are often used as sources to reveal reading habits.<sup>105</sup> Ryder's reading practices in which he copied excerpts for use in conversation were critical to his social abilities. The mention of *The Spectator* is important as this publication represented a bastion of politeness, providing topics in print intended for polite conversation.

Clubs, societies and associations were an important aspect of eighteenth-century male sociability. Reading clubs, like circulating libraries and subscription libraries, gained in popularity throughout the period. They provided access to books, and conversation, particularly within a collective environment.<sup>106</sup> Societies often subscribed to the publication of certain works, contributing money as a group rather than just as an individual

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<sup>102</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 287, 1 Aug. 1716.

<sup>103</sup> Ryder thrived in sociable company and enjoyed conversation with peers. However, sometimes he grew bored of others and turned to reading, even if this desire for solitude did not last long. On 29 June 1715 he wrote, 'When sister and aunt and father were gone to London I did not know how to fix to any one thing, but read sometimes the Tatlers, turning to one thing and to another, sometimes sitting in a drowsy careless posture wishing for company though when I had it wanted to be alone'. Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 44.

<sup>104</sup> Moss, *Commonplace-books*.

<sup>105</sup> Allan, *Commonplace*. See Introduction chapter, p. 13.

<sup>106</sup> K. Sutherland has written that 'varied methods of access' to books, including reading clubs, 'contributed to blur distinctions between the public-political and private-unpoliticized space of reading, between kinds of literature, and specifically between 'high' and 'low' genres and the tastes and capacities of socio-economically diverse audiences'. K. Sutherland, 'British literature', p. 669. The Book Society

subscriber.<sup>107</sup> The Book Society formed by the composer Marsh in Chichester in 1790 met once a month to choose books to buy and pay membership fees, and once every three months to have supper together at the steward's house. The purpose of the club was to collect books for the members to read, as well as to encourage conversation. In 1790 Marsh described one meeting thus: 'on our return I went to supper at Mr Gowan's, it being the quarterly meeting of the Book Society of which he now became steward, where I met 7 other members'.<sup>108</sup> The steward changed annually.<sup>109</sup> Throughout Marsh's diary, there are mentions of conversations between members of the Book Society during the quarterly dinner meetings. After all members had read the ordered books, the society sold the books through an auction.<sup>110</sup> '6 setts of books' were read by the members during each quarter, along with 'Magazines and Reviews'.<sup>111</sup> Literary life was integrated tightly with social life. Conversations grew from readers' opinions on publications circulated in the society.

Many book societies included men exclusively. 'Gentlemen' comprised Marsh's Book Society entirely. The following indicates that it was a version of a gentleman's club:

On the next day, the first meeting of the Book Society was held at my house...when the plan was settled as follows. The members (which were limited to 12.) to meet together on the first Monday in every month at the Catch Club Room

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founded by Marsh was just one of many such clubs flourishing in the eighteenth century that propelled these trends.

<sup>107</sup> J.R.R. Adams has found that eight artisan reading clubs in counties Down and Antrim in Ireland subscribed to the publication of W. Anderson, *Collection of moral, instructive and religious poems* (Belfast, 1830). J.R.R. Adams, *The printed word and the common man: popular culture in Ulster, 1700-1900* (Belfast, 1987), p. 124.

<sup>108</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 456, 6 July 1789.

<sup>109</sup> HL, Marsh, HM 54457, Vol 13, p. 100-101, May 1790.

<sup>110</sup> Marsh wrote in January 1790, 'I went to a Quarterly Meeting of the Book Society at Mr. Middletons where after Supper 6 setts of Books that were read by all the Members & done with, were sold by Auction, Mr. Middleton, as Steward, being Auctioneer', HL, Marsh, HM 54457, Vol 13, p. 59, Jan. 1790.

<sup>111</sup> HL, Marsh, HM 54457, Vol 13, p. 100-101, May, 1790.

between 8. & 9. in the evening, to chuse [sic] books, pay their quarterage forfeits etc.<sup>112</sup>

Brian Robins' research on catch and glee culture in eighteenth-century Britain has revealed that catch clubs evolved in convivial male society, particularly from male tavern culture in the early part of the century.<sup>113</sup> The first official organisation, the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Catch Club of London, was formed in 1761. Similar groups for male singing of catches and glees formed thereafter. Reference to the Catch Club room in 1790 demonstrates that Marsh's book society was meeting in a male club room in Chichester. Like an eighteenth-century coffee shop, the club room seems to have housed a male polite forum. Print consumption was a social past-time through which men like Marsh could engage in polite conversation. However, that it is not to suggest that reading and discussion were exclusively male activities. It was more that print consumption for Marsh fit into a male culture of debate and socialising. He was carrying out a mode of masculinity that favoured discussion and homosocial activities.

Eighteenth-century reading societies were the 'institutional embodiment of the Republic of Letters'.<sup>114</sup> Readers celebrated learning in an associational context. Marsh went on to form a Library Society similar to the Book Society.<sup>115</sup> The sociability of reading was a crucial aspect of the enlightenment project. Literary

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<sup>112</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 452-453, April 1789.

<sup>113</sup> B. Robins, *Catch and glee culture in eighteenth-century England* (Woodbridge, 2006).

<sup>114</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 81. The 'Republic of Letters' refers to the intellectual community in late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century Europe and America. This community of scholars was mostly comprised of men.

<sup>115</sup> Marsh wrote, 'in the evening of this day I went to meet Dr Sanden Dr Bayley & sev'l other gent'n at Mr Florances in West Street to endeavour to establish another Book Society at Chichester, in w'ch it being proposed to keep many of the books procured, so as gradually to form a library, we gave it the name of the Library Society, the plan of w'ch was no talked over, it having been suggested by Mr Florance, who had published a little pamphlet proposing such a society, including also besides books, an astronomical apparatus with a good telescope etc. w'ch however

debates, particularly those related to politics, required the rapidly expanding print market for their dissemination and they needed spaces for social discussion and consideration. This was integral to the famous 'public sphere' as theorised by Jürgen Habermas.<sup>116</sup> The movement of books, particularly literary journals, as well as the networks, societies and institutions founded in the name of reading helped to spread the intellectual and cultural movement.<sup>117</sup> Literary journals provided scholars with knowledge about what was going on in their own community.<sup>118</sup> John Marsh was a product of enlightenment culture, and his book society and library society are examples of eighteenth-century intellectual sociability among men. The books read within these societies were non-fiction. Notably, the men did not read novels in the societies, though they did read novels in other circumstances.<sup>119</sup>

Reading societies were also a feature of university life for eighteenth-century scholars. The trained doctor, Syllas Neville, was involved in a medical society at the University of Edinburgh. According to his diary, this group circulated and discussed papers written by its members. They members wrote letters collectively to the academic faculty. In one instance, when a doctor was too unwell to teach any longer, the society wrote to him to advise that he stop teaching.<sup>120</sup> Neville also described having to write a paper himself to circulate within the group, even though he had only found out about it at the last minute.<sup>121</sup> Neville's involvement in

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were given up as requiring too large a subscription'. Robins, *Marsh*, p. 562, 15 Oct. 1794.

<sup>116</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 43, footnote 106, on Habermas' 'public sphere'.

<sup>117</sup> A. Goldgar, *Impolite learning: conduct and community in the republic of letters, 1680-1750* (London, 1995).

<sup>118</sup> Goldgar, *Learning*, p. 56.

<sup>119</sup> See pp. 140-142 below, on men and novels.

<sup>120</sup> NRO, Neville, MC 7/2, p. 3, May 1774: 'Last Frid<sup>y</sup>. At an extra Meet<sup>g</sup>. of the Medical Soc<sup>y</sup>. it was proposed to send Ltr to Dr Cullen in the name of the Soc<sup>y</sup>. expressing the g<sup>t</sup> concern at his late bad state of Health & requesting him to find an immediate end to his course of practice if he tho<sup>t</sup> it in conflict w<sup>t</sup> his health to go on vs<sup>t</sup>':

<sup>121</sup> NRO, Neville, MC 7/2, p. 29, 9 Dec. 1774: 'I was confounded when at my return ...I observed in the minute book of the Med. Society that I was appointed to deliver a paper to circulate tomorrow—not hav<sup>g</sup> heard the appointment tho I was present at the last meeting for private business & hav<sup>g</sup> been a good deal engaged w<sup>t</sup> Company

this society demonstrates that sociability was necessary for a genteel education. Thomas Hollis, discussed in the next chapter, who was highly admired by Neville, belonged to societies as well, and his networks served his propagandist and enlightenment purposes.<sup>122</sup> Societies, clubs and coffeehouses shaped social and cultural life, bringing men together in conversation ranging from politics to literature.<sup>123</sup>

Some of the men studied here described coffeehouse conversations about books. The lawyer Dudley Ryder wrote on 25 October 1715 that he, 'came into the coffee-house where were Mr. Jackson and some others. We talked of more common affairs, but particularly of the beauty of Milton's poetry. I intend to buy a volume of his miscellaneous poetry in 12mo'.<sup>124</sup> The discussion prompted Ryder to purchase some of Milton's poetry. This excerpt is a clear example of coffeehouse sociability based on reading experiences.

The sociability of books meant familial society as well as wider neighbourly, friendship or professional society. Marsh's social reading included reading aloud with family members. Like other case studies in this chapter, Marsh's reading practices contained many instances of familial print consumption. He did not only engage in reading as a social activity with his male friends; he read with his wife and children. In 1774, he wrote 'in the evenings I read to her (*his wife*) & my sister whilst they were using their needles etc. for which purpose I had lain in a small assortment of books when in London of which we began with

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last month & then I had not thought anything about the matter—this makes me very uneasy, there is no time to do anything'.

<sup>122</sup> NRO, Neville, MC 7/2, p. 25, 11 Sept. 1774: 'on one of the blank leaves of Tolands Life of Milton pres<sup>d</sup> by the late worthy Mr Tho<sup>s</sup> Hollis to the Library here he has written,

"An Englishman is desirous of having the honor to present this book to The University of Edinburgh."

He indeed did honor to the name of Englishmen'.

<sup>123</sup> Brewer, *English culture*, p. 36. See also P. Clark, 'Sociability and urbanity: clubs and societies in the eighteenth-century city', 8th H. J. Dyos Memorial Lecture, 23 Apr. 1986 (Leicester, 1986).

<sup>124</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 124.



Fielding's works, Don Quixote etc'.<sup>125</sup> Marsh recounts that he read to his wife and sister while they were engaged in needlework. He had prepared a 'small assortment' of books for that purpose, including works by Fielding and Cervantes. In 1801, Marsh wrote that, 'having heard much of Miss Hamilton's celebrated novel of the "Modern Philosopher" we on Wed'n the 14<sup>th</sup>. got it from Humphry's Library w<sup>ch</sup> Edw'd & I afterw'ds read out on even'gs...to Mrs M. & were all much entertain'd with it'.<sup>126</sup> Here Marsh described obtaining a 'celebrated novel' by a female author from the library, reading it aloud with his son and entertaining the whole family. These excerpts give some sense of daily routine for Marsh, suggesting that indoor pursuits, such as games, needlework for women, and reading aloud, for men and women, took place indoors in the evening.<sup>127</sup> John Marsh's family reading was also characterised by the consumption of a variety of genres and authors. He read both male and female authors aloud.<sup>128</sup> Both he and his wife read to family groups and genres included novels, travels, news, philosophy, history, poetry and others.<sup>129</sup> The depiction of Marsh's family life is one in which books formed a pillar of mutual enjoyment and enlightenment. Reading inspired family togetherness as well as conversation within the family circle, as will be demonstrated especially in the case of Anna Larpent. Although Marsh rarely mentioned the details of conversations, it is reasonable to assume that family discussions could have revolved around books and reading. Familial sociability was an important aspect of most of the male reading lives studied in this chapter.

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<sup>125</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 127, Nov. 1774.

<sup>126</sup> Robins, *Marsh*, p. 725-26, January 1801. According to Robins, this work was Elizabeth H. Hamilton's novel *Memoirs of modern philosophers*, published in 3 volumes in 1800-1801.

<sup>127</sup> Though, of course, both these examples are from the winter when outdoor family activities in the evening would have been less likely.

<sup>128</sup> See the Virtuous Reader chapter for similar gender-neutral reading patterns.

<sup>129</sup> See Tadmor, 'reading'.

Contemporary print culture argued that sociability was a requirement of respectability. *The Spectator* complained of melancholic and mournful religious types who looked down on laughter and conversation as sinful. 'Superstitious Fears, and groundless Scruples, cut them off from the Pleasures of Conversation, and all those social Entertainments which are not only innocent but laudable; as if Mirth was made for Reprobates, and Chearfulness of Heart denied those who are the only Persons that have proper Title to it'.<sup>130</sup> This common requirement of conviviality and the enjoyment of company, the 'pleasures of conversation' and 'mirth', was contrasted in the article with an older, Calvinist embrace of sobriety and sombreness, considered more characteristic of the previous century. In the eighteenth-century, the growth of print culture and readership interacted with social pursuits such as assemblies, balls, coffee houses, resort towns and more. The 'urban renaissance' included the circulation and consumption of books and print, along literary conversations, networking and mutual enjoyment.<sup>131</sup> Eighteenth-century middling masculinity cannot be understood without exploring the requirement for conviviality.

### **Books and Money**

Financial awareness was imperative for all the men analysed here. For those who were married, family survival depended on maintaining a balance between purchases that were necessities, decencies and luxuries. For those who were single, a similar balance had to be struck in order for one to survive and thrive. Most the male readers studied here considered each book purchase carefully, weighing up its value. For those diarists who

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<sup>130</sup> *The Spectator*, no. 494, vol. 7 (London, 1713), p. 112.

<sup>131</sup> Borsay, *Urban renaissance*; R. M. Wiles, 'Provincial culture in early Georgian England,' in P. Fritz and D. Williams, eds., *The triumph of culture: eighteenth-century*

included financial accounts within their diaries, books were included in the daily outward and inward flow of money. The male midwife Flinders considered reference books, such as law books and geography books, 'necessary' and 'usefull'. Such books were necessities for Flinders, even when they were slightly expensive.<sup>132</sup> However, near the end of 1785, he wrote of his book purchases for that year: 'In regard to Books I have been somewhat extravagant this Year, having purchased several new works...I am afraid I have not expended less than £5 in Books this Year—this is extravagant. I must be more cautious for the future'.<sup>133</sup> Flinders considered 'new works' that were more expensive to be 'extravagant'. He did not reveal what types of books these 'new works' were, but this evidence suggests that while book purchases for these middling men were necessary and a mark of respectability, sometimes compromise on newness was required.

Flinders was conscientious about book-expenditure but he considered his learning and worldly awareness valuable. In the example of the geography work mentioned above, he said that it was 'expensive'. However, the book was so comprehensive, a folio version including maps and prints, he believed it would 'preclude the necessity' of purchasing 'Voyages or Travells [sic]'. A single comprehensive text of quality was worth a high price, as it decreased the need to purchase several other books.

Flinders was not concerned with the quality of all his books. He was involved in a selling-back system, in which he sent parcels of his old books to be sold. With the profits, he then bought new books.

I sent a second Parcel of Books to Messrs Lackington & Co. I had estimated them about £3, but they called them a very

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*perspectives* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 49-68; Feather, *Provincial book trade*; Brewer, *English culture*; and Clark, 'Sociability'.

<sup>132</sup> See p. 115 above, on Flinders necessary books.

<sup>133</sup> Beardsley and Bennett, *Flinders*, vol. II, p. 20.

unsaleable Parcel & would allow me only 14s which is a poor price indeed—but as they were sent off I had no remedy. They had 7s in hand from [the] last parcel, so I ordered to the amount (viz £1 1s 0d) in Bell's Poets...They are a beautiful addition to my Library—but 'tis exchanging many Books for a few.<sup>134</sup>

Flinders appreciated the 'beautiful addition' of Bell's Poets to his library, but he was displeased that he had to exchange 'many Books for a few'. He did recognise the quality of Bell's Poets, but he seemed more concerned with quantity of books in this instance. Flinders strove to purchase necessary books only, accepting that some expensive books were allowable as they negated the need for other purchases. He was frustrated when he obtained a few books in exchange for a greater number, also suggesting that he valued having a large quantity of books in his collection, which could signify respectability. Flinders said that his purchase of a law book was 'necessary' as every man should know of the laws that governed him. Thus, the definitions of necessity and decency merge. Worldly knowledge and social status were necessary for Flinders because respectability was necessary. He categorized his expenditure on books according to such ideals of middling male masculinity. He considered some books luxuries, particularly those that were new works.

The other men studied did not leave much evidence of how they categorized their book expenditure. However, Parson Woodforde was a keen account keeper within the pages of his diaries, including his book purchases. This suggests again that expenditure on books was part of the carefully regulated balance of outgoings and incomings. A volume from 1759-1760 of his manuscript diary contained 'An Account of Monies &c'. He listed

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<sup>134</sup> Beardsley and Bennett, *Flinders*, vol. II, p. 143-144.

all money spent as well as received.<sup>135</sup> In some volumes of the diary, finances formed the bulk of the records, whereas in others he included expenses within narrative entries on daily events. In other volumes, particularly those later on in his career, account-keeping within the diary volumes was not as evident. At this time he was settled as a parson, no longer a student, so perhaps his finances did not need such close attention.

Woodforde was meticulous in his records of consumption, making him a notable case study in the history of male consumerism. When established in his vocation, he took it upon himself to arrange payment of groceries and make purchases for his household.<sup>136</sup> While a student, his financial accounts recorded 'paid for' items along with items for which he still owed money. Isolating reading purchases from lists for a seven-month period between October 1758 and May 1759 reveals the following examples of book expenditure:<sup>137</sup>

Oct 1758

'Two Logick [sic] Books \_ \_ O \_ 0"6"0

'A Ruler & Book \_ \_ O \_ 0"1"0

'I Subscribed to a Book \_ \_ p \_ 0"3"0

Nov 7 1758

'A Musick [sic] Book \_ \_ p \_ 0"1"6

May 5 1759

'Langbaines Moral Philosophy Lat: \_ \_ O \_ 0"1"6

'Zenophon \_ \_ \_ O \_ 0"8"0<sup>138</sup>

These selections are mostly non-specific books with the exception of Langbaine and Zenophon. This was unlike other readers in this chapter who always mentioned the name of the author or the title of their books. The more important details for Woodforde were the prices and paying or owing of money. It is not clear whether

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<sup>135</sup> BOD, Woodforde, MSS Eng. Misc. f. 101-112, No. 2, 1759-1760.

<sup>136</sup> M. Finn, 'Men's things: masculine possession in the consumer revolution', *Social History*, 25 (May, 2000), pp. 133-155.

<sup>137</sup> I have interpreted 'O' and 'p' to mean 'owe' and 'paid'.

<sup>138</sup> BOD, Woodforde, MSS Eng. Misc. f. 101-112, No. 1 1758-1760.

Woodforde had a corresponding account book in which he copied monetary transactions listed in his diary, or whether the diary served as an account book itself. Regardless, his unceremonial remarks on ‘a musick book’ and ‘two logick books’ imply that a book was just a mundane purchase, indistinct from ‘a ruler’. Unlike most the other readers, Woodforde did not view his reading as a matter of genteel decency, but rather a utilitarian means to an end: the completion of his degree and the start of his career in the Church.

### **Reading of Fiction**

Middling male readers chose their books according to personal taste, as well as according to the social, economic and religious influences already described. Book choices for both men, and women, were extremely varied. This final section addresses middling male genre selection, specifically related to creative genres. Whilst historiography has focused on creative literature as a ‘feminine’ genre, in fact, eighteenth-century male readers were also keen consumers of novels, poetry, drama and satire. John Marsh read novels avidly; Dudley Ryder enjoyed ‘romances’.<sup>139</sup> James Woodforde liked *Pamela*.<sup>140</sup> In October of 1782 Woodforde wrote, ‘busy in reading *Evelina* a Novel, lent Nancy by Mr. Custance—there are 3 Volumes of it—wrote by a Miss Burney—these are very cleaver [sic] and sensible’.<sup>141</sup> Middling male readers embraced novel reading as a fulfilling pastime.

The men studied read novels for purposes distinct from their worldly, occupational reading as well as distinct from their pious reading. Marsh did not mention reading novels within either the Book Society or Library Society. Instead, he read novels

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<sup>139</sup> Matthews, *Ryder*, p. 219, 13 Apr. 1716.

<sup>140</sup> BOD, Woodforde, MSS Eng. Misc. f. 101-112, No. 3, 2 Feb. 1761. See p. x above on Ryder’s reading routine.

as entertainment and a way to pass the time on journeys or in the evenings.<sup>142</sup> The societies read non-fiction. This suggests that novels played a specific role within Marsh's reading life. In the diary, they appear as part of a more recreational, personal and familial literary activity. Novels were read alone, as well as shared within the family and read aloud at home. Notably Marsh mentioned reading a novel while ill. He said he read Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), hoping that it would cure his boredom in confinement.<sup>143</sup> Rather than signifying the 'frivolity' of novels, the distinction between book society reading and novel reading demonstrates again that readers had specific goals for their books based on genre and their own inclinations. For Marsh, novels were for entertainment on journeys or a common activity of family togetherness. Non-fiction was for the enlightenment project of the book society. It is not a hierarchical distinction of worth, but rather a question of purpose, setting and audience.

The novel was not the only creative genre enjoyed by the men surveyed. Flinders also mentioned a variety of titles from a range of creative genres, including drama and poetry. In contrast to Marsh, however, he never recorded any titles of novels. As Marsh read so many novels, the absence of any novels in the Flinders account is notable. Flinders did not mention his reading environment often like Marsh so it is difficult to detect a relationship between genre and reading situation. Still, the noteworthy aspect of Flinders reading selection is the abundance of poetry, suggesting its primary importance in his consumption of print. Marsh, however, only mentioned poetry once or twice. Novels were primary for Marsh; for Flinders, it was poetry. Reading choices reflected personal choice and taste.

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<sup>141</sup>BOD, Woodforde, MSS. Eng. Misc. f. 155-7, 21 Sept 1781-2 June 1784, 19 Oct. 1782.

<sup>142</sup> See Appendix 2 for a list of books mentioned by Marsh in his diary.

<sup>143</sup> HL, Marsh, HM 54457, Vol. 25, p. 4, May 1805. This novel examined the relationship between a mother and a daughter. Marsh showed no aversion to reading

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship between class and gender with the assumption that the two interlinked. The sample of male readers investigated here ranged from lower tradesmen to middling- and upper-middling professional men. As a group, they displayed similar male values, those of occupational competency, pious reading, community and familial sociability and awareness of financial costs associated with their goals for reading. This chapter has not just imitated Hannah Barker's study in locating these values generally, but has instead placed them within the context of male readership.

A tension has been highlighted in the historiography of masculinity between politeness and domestic values. It has been suggested here that these were not dichotomous spheres that men were within or without, but rather that men, like women, moved in and out of both, and that there were varying degrees of politeness and domesticity reflected in reading practices. While there was a shift between the earlier parochial case studies of Cannon and Harrold to more public political and cultural reading of Neville and Marsh, the century did not represent a big shift from one type of male reader to another. For example, Ryder was concerned with polite reading in the early part of the century, whilst Flinders was highly concerned with piety and familial matters in the 1780s. Differences in habits and routines were more dependent on class and occupation than on change over time in the century. I have emphasised here that reading fit into both the social/public and the personal/private. In fact, reading took place within many domestic environments, as well as within

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a female-authored work that explored relationships between women. Again, genre and book choice cannot be easily categorised according to gender.



varied polite forums. A binary model does not sufficiently encompass eighteenth-century reading lives.

Next, this chapter has shown how middling men negotiated eighteenth-century debates of classical training versus ‘usefulness’ in relation to book-learning. Here there was a difference in opinion, for example, between Syllas Neville who believed scientists and medical doctors should still have classical training and John Cannon who believed men were more ‘learned’ when they were masters of their careers and spent time educating themselves in usefulness. Linked to this debate were ideas about reading as a means to acquire virtue and civility.

Genre has been a valuable tool of analysis. While this chapter has emphasised practicality in non-fiction reading as a means to improve professional and trade skills, as well as comportment and respectability, there is more work to be done on men’s reading of fiction (with the caveat, of course, that non-fiction and fiction were not the exact same categories which we understand them to be today). It is important to emphasise the importance of creative genres to the male readers particularly within their familial and recreational spaces and times.

In order to analyse gender, this chapter addressed four masculine values that related to reading practices. In the study of readership, some historiography has considered whether the actual act of reading was gendered as well. Other readers from this thesis have been analysed by historians as ‘passive’ or ‘active’ readers, with the implication that the ‘active’, critical type of reader was a more masculine type.<sup>144</sup> The research for this thesis has found a gendering of reading mode to be an inaccurate framework for understanding men’s and women’s reading practices. In fact, both men and women were ‘active’ when they chose to, and both men and women could be ‘passive’ when the purposes suited them, particularly during devotional, daily

reading of prayers or sermons. At times, the male readers described in this chapter were critical of their authors, such as when Marsh was 'disgusted' by Paine's *Rights of Man*. On other occasions, men were reflective and spiritual, as when Ryder read Derham's *Astro-Theology* and beseeched God to 'impress this great truth, the sense of Thy being and continual presence with us' upon his soul. He almost asked that the words, the theological text he was reading, be imprinted on himself and his thoughts, as if he were absorbing it, not reviewing or judging. Of course, 'active' or 'passive' were not the only two options for reading styles. Reading as mild entertainment and light mental stimulation would fit in between these two, as when Marsh brought Jackson's 30 *Letters* and Moritz's *Travels in England* to amuse himself in inns when travelling. Reading modalities varied according to the goals of the reader, not gender.

Reading and the emotions will be a further thread throughout the thesis as diarists, both men and women, reflected on their feelings and reactions while reading. While no men in this chapter described tearing up over a novel, some spoke of sadness. Edmund Harrold wrote of 'melancholy'. He also spoke of reading that made his 'heart ache'. Novels amused Marsh. Ryder wrote of being diverted by books, as well as sometimes listless, anxious or self-conscious. Cannon 'took pleasure' in reading history books as a child. There were a range of feelings described by the men in response to their reading.

This chapter has raised the issue of performative reading and contextual reading, the action of reading and the content of reading. Contextual reading was necessary for knowledge acquisition, mastering the 'mystery' of a profession or trade. Performative reading was especially important within faith practice, but it was also a mechanism of sociability, both familial and communal. Books formed bonds within family and

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<sup>144</sup> See *Virtuous Reader* chapter p. 235.

community social groups. Book collecting could be a habit and hobby and a well-stocked library could be an impressive status symbol for men. Here we see the domestic and personal habits and spaces serving as potential showing-off points to the outside world. The men discussed above used reading to improve their own social, personal and economic positions. Their reading reveals a culture of books characterised by distinct trademarks of eighteenth-century middling masculinity.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Philosophical Reader**

Thomas Hollis (1720-1774) promoted the reading of books and objects, which he distributed in order to inspire political awareness and action. He read these as representative of Commonwealth ideals and politics of the seventeenth century. Hollis' reading was not just about his own understanding and interpretation of texts, but also about their distribution and circulation. He promoted a wide culture of readership upheld through his single-handed propaganda efforts intended to instruct and inspire collective action. Hollis believed in parliamentary reform and he donated books on ideal government to those in positions of influence.

Hollis' circulation of this material exemplifies a reader dedicated to sharing ideas with other readers in order to promote collective improvement. He believed that political oppression would be avoided through the accessibility and preservation of information deemed by him to be important. While much of his diary focuses on production and distribution of print, it reveals less about his individual reading life.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis of the diary highlights two critical points about conceptualising print consumption in the eighteenth century. Firstly, reading could not be separated from the rest of the print cycle of production and distribution. Secondly, reading was as much sociable and dependent on personal networks as it was an individual endeavour. This chapter explores Hollis' social world of readers as well as his support and patronage of printers. At the same time, it teases out a picture of Hollis' individual reading life from the available evidence in the diary. Some of his personal philosophies

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 3 for reproduced sections of Hollis' manuscript diary.

can be inferred through the examination of the books and authors he chose to promote.

Thomas Hollis devoted himself to gift-giving and collaboration with the literary, artistic, merchant and political circles of the mid-eighteenth century. A dedicated engagement with print culture facilitated many of his efforts. He donated books to libraries, museums and individuals, worked closely with booksellers and printers to publish material in line with his political beliefs, contributed critical notes to editions, circulated print matter within various committees, attended book auctions and purchased and read relevant material of the day, all for the cause of his overriding plan, 'the cause of liberty'.<sup>2</sup> Hollis' books, those he commissioned for print, those he gave to fellow philosophers and those he read himself were all part of his extensive, lifetime mission to project his philosophy onto the world as well as reinforce his politics in his own mind. As a philosophical reader, he intended to share his ideas through the sharing of books.

Hollis' was independently wealthy, which allowed him to undertake his mission to enlighten others. He was born in London and had schooling in England and Amsterdam, being originally educated for a career in business. Later, after the death of his father in 1735, under the guardianship of John Hollister, he trained for public service under the instruction of John Ward of Gresham College, London. He took chambers in Lincoln's Inn from 1740 to 1748, without ever reading law. By this time, he was rich from inheritance from his father and uncle. He toured Europe in the late 1740s and again in the early 1750s, the first trip with his life-long friend and heir, Thomas Brand. During these trips, he made important connections, particularly with French *philosophes* and Italian painters, which he maintained throughout his life.

Hollis believed citizenship should be active and his life project was to protect English liberty through the dissemination of commonwealth tracts, particularly the seventeenth-century canon, and objects of 'Virtù'. After a strenuous career of pursuing his plan in London, Hollis retired in 1770 to Dorset where he owned about 3,000 acres. He died there suddenly in 1774, was buried in one of his fields, and the grave was ploughed over.<sup>3</sup>

### **Thomas Hollis and the Historians**

The survival of Hollis' 1758-70 unpublished diary, his 1780 published *Memoirs*, numerous published letters, and other manuscript correspondence and papers provide a wealth of material for Hollis biographers.<sup>4</sup> Historians also study the global legacy left through his thousands of contributions to contemporary individuals and institutions, in particular those related to trans-Atlantic relations leading to the American War for Independence. This historiography focuses on the devotion of Hollis and similar radical thinkers to the cause of the colonists' revolt against the British monarchy. The published letters by Hollis are those connected to donations to Harvard College, Massachusetts, and his principal American correspondents, Jonathan Mayhew and Andrew Eliot.<sup>5</sup> In 1950, Caroline Robbins characterised Hollis as 'The strenuous Whig', describing in a biographical portrait of Hollis a man committed to politics, philosophy and personal impulses, while ultimately focusing on his involvement in Anglo-American relations, particularly his

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<sup>2</sup> Many thanks to Professor Justin Champion for the loan of his microfilm copy of the original Thomas Hollis diary. This quote comes from the diary, 20 June 1760. Harvard reference: Houghton Library, Hollis, MS Eng 1191.

<sup>3</sup> Bonwick, 'Hollis', *ODNB*.

<sup>4</sup> T. Hollis, [compiled by F. Blackburne], *Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, esq, 2 vols.* (London, 1780).

<sup>5</sup> B. Knollenberg, ed., 'Thomas Hollis and Jonathan Mayhew: their correspondence, 1759-1766', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 69 (1947-50), pp. 102-93; 'Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis', *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 4th ser., 4 (1858), pp. 398-461.

encouragement of oppositionist print circulation.<sup>6</sup> The Hollis sources have allowed for a close examination of his involvement in trans-Atlantic relations.

The abundance of literature related to Hollis vis a vis the American question is unsurprising. Not only was he ardently dedicated to the colonists' cause as evidenced in the letters and diary, his contributions to the Harvard College Library, in particular, were extraordinary. As all Hollis scholars have pointed out, his ethos and political beliefs were intimately allied with those of his colonial counterparts. To Hollis, the North American fight for independence from Britain embodied the same cause of liberty and freedom to which he had dedicated his life. Hollis' relentless, propaganda-fueled encouragement of liberty meshed smoothly into rhetoric enshrined in the mythology of the American fight for independence from an oppressive tyranny. Thus, historiography surrounding Thomas Hollis contains several key studies, the majority of which being related to Anglo-American revolutionary politics in the second half of the eighteenth century.

An excellent study by W.H. Bond, *Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn: A Whig and His Books*, begins to move away from the narrow range of analysis presented by earlier Hollis studies.<sup>7</sup> Bond's work transfers attention from Harvard and Benjamin Franklin and fixes it instead on Hollis' Miltonian education, his conception of Whiggism, his concern for anonymity, the imagery of his book bindings, his patronage of book publishers, as well as how he distributed books and to whom. While Bond's work does concentrate on the intellectual and political concerns of the Hollis story, it also presents new arguments concerning the man's mode of operation, and, most importantly, his engagement with the world of print.

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<sup>6</sup> C. Robbins, 'The strenuous whig: Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 7 (1950), pp. 407–53.

<sup>7</sup> W.H. Bond, *Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn: a whig and his books* (Cambridge, 1990).

Of particular interest in Bond's book are the middle chapters on bindings, design and patronage. In regard to the bindings and Hollis' chosen imagery, Bond finds that Hollis was, 'unique in the large number of emblems he employed, the care with which he chose them, and the generosity with which he commissioned such bindings in order to scatter them far and wide'.<sup>8</sup> Hollis intended that his emblems would convey specific meanings in the cultivation of liberty. Eighteenth-century print still contained many emblems, an iconographic language understood by the educated public. Bond's analysis of Hollis' images, namely his classical motifs, creates new avenues for exploring how Hollis wanted the public to read his commissioned prints. Bond's work on Hollis as 'patron and designer' is also illuminating in this respect. Hollis commissioned art (notably work by Giovanni Battista Cipriani) in the firmly classical, republican genre, for the 'cause of liberty'. He actively intervened in the editing, printing and publishing of his chosen texts as well. Hollis filled his diary with collaborations with numerous publishers. His involvement was intensive. As Bond remarks, 'Hollis was inspired to combine his own interest in typography with his life-long study of classical antiquities, in particular numismatic inscriptions and other Latin epigraphy'.<sup>9</sup> Hollis, himself, came up with many of the designs and typography for the books he commissioned for publishing.<sup>10</sup> Bond's study of the technical methods employed by Hollis to guide his readers is extremely valuable. Not only does it shift Hollis historiography away from simple reviews of political correspondence and questions of personal influence on political powers, it engages in material features of book history, as well as art history, critical to understanding Hollis' position in the world of eighteenth-century readership.

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<sup>8</sup> Bond, *Hollis*, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Bond, *Hollis*, p. 88.



This chapter introduces gender into the story of Hollis as a philosophical reader. Kate Davies has already conceptualised Hollis within a gender framework, particularly through a comparison with Catherine Macaulay.<sup>11</sup> Hollis was an ardent fan of Macaulay's *History of England* and he designed and commissioned a Cipriani print of Macaulay that formed the frontispiece of the third volume.<sup>12</sup> According to Davies, in terms of gender, there was nothing problematic in the celebration of Macaulay as a figure of public virtue as contemporaries saw her as exterior to potential indecencies found in public writing. 'As Hollis regarded the feminine elegance of Macaulay's writing as coexistent with the masculine magnanimity of its context, so he suggests here that republican liberty might be connected to a modern liberal idea of progress'.<sup>13</sup> Unlike Macaulay, the 'public woman', Davies considers Hollis to be the 'private man'. For this, Davies says, Hollis was criticised by his contemporaries because his lifestyle was incompatible with the republican ideal of active, participatory masculinity.<sup>14</sup> Horace Walpole called him 'as simple a poor soul as ever existed'.<sup>15</sup> It is undeniable that Hollis was devoted to his understanding of a 'private life', one of anonymous donations and a refusal to take any public office. He often reiterated in his diary his vow to remain a 'private and independent individual'.<sup>16</sup> For Hollis, however, privacy and anonymity was not a rejection of masculinity. He believed his behaviour was 'manful' and reliant on civic humanism.

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<sup>10</sup> In his Diary on 15 June 1760, Hollis wrote: 'In the morning Dr. Templeman with me, as before, Society affairs. Prepared the Title-page for the new edition of "The life of Milton by John Toland"'.  
<sup>11</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter, p. 75, for further biographical information on Macaulay.

<sup>12</sup> Davies, *Macaulay*, p. 62.  
<sup>13</sup> Davies, *Macaulay*, p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> Davies, *Macaulay*, p. 59. As already mentioned in the Ideal Reader chapter and Occupational Reader chapter, eighteenth-century masculinity included an expectation of active involvement in the world (*vita activa*), rather than studious retirement (*vita contemplativa*).  
<sup>15</sup> Robbins, 'Whig', p. 409.

<sup>16</sup> Hollis, 12 Nov. 1760.

## ***Virtù* and Masculinity**

For Hollis, masculinity was a philosophical ideal integrated into meanings of *Virtù* and a duty to enlighten others.<sup>17</sup> He imagined his activities in a philosophical-ideological framework, a sustained engagement with the public mind. Ruth Bloch has argued that the word *Virtù*, which Hollis used repeatedly throughout his diary, meant ‘manliness’, according to Machiavellian civic humanism.<sup>18</sup> Even though, by the eighteenth century in Britain the term had come to refer to the fine arts and the collecting of curios, Hollis’ embracing of the word also represents a philosophy of duty to the state, which he venerated in men such as the controversial republican, Oliver Cromwell.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the fact that the eighteenth-century usage of the word had more to do with art and collecting, meant that it fit into Hollis’ programme of propaganda through the reading of texts, art and images. He did not choose to perform civic duty through the contemporary avenues of public office, and instead deployed ideas through the dispersal of words and objects.

Hollis often spoke of being ‘engaged’ in *Virtù* or in ‘pursuit’ of *Virtù*. Even if he did mostly use the word to refer to material culture, his dedication to obtaining objects as well as dispersing them was ideological. Thus, it was the classical meaning of ‘things’ that mattered and the employment of the word *Virtù* was significant. The word was appropriate as its classical origin was philosophical and its eighteenth century use was aesthetic. Hollis’ programme embraced both the philosophical and aesthetic

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<sup>17</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter p. 68 for discussions of education for boys who were meant to contribute to the good of society.

<sup>18</sup> R. Bloch, ‘The gendered meanings of virtue in revolutionary America’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 13 (1987), pp. 37-58.

<sup>19</sup> ‘virtu | vertu, n’: A love of, or taste for, works of art or curios; a knowledge of, or interest in, the fine arts; the fine arts as a subject of study or interest.’ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second edition, 1989; online version December 2011. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/223828>>; accessed 09 Feb. 2012. Earlier version first published in *New English Dictionary*, 1917.

qualities of the word, which will be discussed further below. The material texts and objects of *Virtù* were read and spread in order to enlighten the thinking world about the ideals of good government. He did not want to take public office himself. Hollis applied to his own activities a specific rendering of the word *Virtù* that was a self-fashioned masculine script, independent from contemporary norms of male office-holding.

It has been argued that the concept of virtue transformed in the eighteenth century from a classical concept of civic virtue associated with citizenship to a more privatised, domestic notion based on women as civilising agents within the home, particularly through their education of children.<sup>20</sup> The evidence of Thomas Hollis in this chapter and Anna Larpent in a later chapter perhaps exemplify this argument. Hollis's conception of *Virtù* was one of virility and civic humanism in which men had a duty to the public good, the classical understanding. Larpent's understanding of virtue, on the other hand, propelled her duties as educator to her sons.

Eighteenth-century promoters of civic *Virtù* criticised commerce and luxury for its 'effeminising' effects on society. Algernon Sidney (d. 1683), one of Hollis' favourite republican authors, wrote that Rome became corrupt because its people grew 'cowardly, weak, effeminate, foolish, [and] ill discipline'd'.<sup>21</sup> Samuel Johnson's dictionary described 'virtu' thus:

[Italian. "As this people [the Romans] was of so military a turn, they generally gave fortitude the name of Virtus, or the Virtue, by way of excellence; just as the same nation, now

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<sup>20</sup> D. Harrington, 'Gender, commerce and the transformation of virtue in eighteenth-century Britain', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 31 (Summer, 2001), pp. 33-52.

<sup>21</sup> Algernon Sidney (1623-1683) was a political writer known as the most influential English republican. He was a whig patriot-hero and martyr. J. Scott, 'Sidney, Algernon (1623-1683)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25519>, accessed 09 Feb. 2012]. The above quote comes from A. Sidney (T.G. West, ed.), *Discourses concerning government* (Indianapolis, 1996). Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/223/22281/904489> on 11 Dec.. 2011).

they are so debased and effeminate, call the love of the softer arts, *Virtù*.” Spence, *Polymet.* Dial. x.] A love of the fine arts; a taste for curiosities.<sup>22</sup>

The concept had a feminised meaning in the eighteenth century. However, Hollis based his reckoning of the word on pre-eighteenth-century meanings related to duty to the state. Though Davies has characterised Hollis as a ‘private man’, criticized because of his failure to take public office, in fact his rejection of the public world was not a rejection of duty to the public good. Rather it was a rejection of what he saw as a corruption in society. In response to this corruption, Hollis read classical notions of virtue from Commonwealth books of the seventeenth century. It was these texts which he chose to circulate. In other words, Hollis’ *Virtù* was a manifestation of an older form of masculinity. Again, his reading offered an alternative script to contemporary gender meanings.

This chapter explores and tries to identify the characteristics of Hollis’ philosopher masculinity as a reader, particularly in relation to the occupational masculinity identified in the previous chapter. It investigates how his interaction with books was a way to spread his ideas to a wide audience of readers as well as keep his own mind focused on his life goals. His method of gifting books characterised his evangelical mission to inform the general public through reading.<sup>23</sup> This chapter also analyses how *Virtù* masculinity differed from the masculine preoccupations of reading for knowledge and skills, religious devotion, sociability and financial steadfastness. Therefore, the following will firstly describe and interpret Hollis’ consumption of print based on a

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<sup>22</sup> S. Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language, second edition* (London, 1755), ‘VIR’.

<sup>23</sup> N. Z. Davis has discussed the idea of ‘the gift’ in sixteenth-century France. She writes that a variety of gift exchanges were ‘linked together by the categories and words used to describe them and by the virtues and values they were thought to

close reading of three years of his diary (1759-1761), secondly, draw some comparisons to previous chapters, and thirdly, suggest some further gender conclusions regarding masculinity and reading.

### **Hollis' 'Plan' of Readership**

Thomas Hollis' diary reveals a world of reading dependent upon interpersonal relationships and social networks. All other readers examined in this thesis participated in sociability, whether they were reading at home within a family, sharing literary commentary between friends separated by distance or discussing books in male social clubs and societies. Reading was a shared activity connecting friends, relatives and peers. Hollis meets the expectations of the socially engaged eighteenth-century reader, particularly in his use of relationships to propel his evangelism forward. Despite his devotion to privacy, his diary does not reveal the profile of an introvert or recluse. Hollis believed in bringing about change within the public sphere through the circulation of textual and material propaganda. As a philosophical missionary, he could hardly afford to be reclusive. It is true that some of his days were spent 'within, reading and writing', but the majority of his daily accounts mentioned at least one meeting with a friend or collaborator, and, on most days, several meetings. The diary presents Hollis as an individual with an exceedingly wide network of collaborators and like-minded thinkers.

Not all of Hollis' meetings were regarding the 'business of print'; some concerned art commissions, antiquity, numismatics as well as other artefacts related to the likes of John Milton and Oliver Cromwell.<sup>24</sup> Rosemary Sweet has studied antiquaries in the

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express in the giver and arouse in the recipient'. N. Z. Davis, *The gift in sixteenth-century France* (Oxford, 2001), p. 14. See also Romantic Reader chapter, p. 290.

<sup>24</sup> Milton came to be known as an unambiguous republican in the eighteenth century. However, while he has been cited as one of the 'founding fathers of American and

eighteenth century, ‘those who were important actors in the explosion of print and ideas’.<sup>25</sup> She writes that, politically, ‘antiquarianism had as much to contribute to the Whiggish project of charting the rise of a polite and commercial society as it had to give to the consolidation of a Tory ideology based upon nostalgic conservatism’.<sup>26</sup> For those men fuelled by a love for the past, antiquarianism was another manifestation of the Enlightenment project and classical learning. Sweet has shown that it was partly Hollis’ interests as a collector that influenced the Society of Antiquaries to become more classically-focussed by 1760.<sup>27</sup> Hollis attended auctions and made purchases in shops to acquire his collection. He compiled much of this collection to donate elsewhere, in accordance with his active reading of objects and texts intended for circulation.

Paramount to Hollis’ programme for directed readership was his interest in collecting and showing off pieces of *Virtù*, as well as discussing the theory of *Virtù* in the abstract. In the first excerpt below, he was concerned about the idea of *Virtù*, whereas the second is focussed on its physical manifestation.

Mr. Stancier Porten of Naples, my old and good friend, called on me, on his return to England. Rejoiced to see him, and in so good a state of Health. Much discourse about Italy, *Virtù*, France, Politics, and his own private affairs. Wrote the evening and read.<sup>28</sup>

Bought some curious tracts at a Stall in Piccadilly. In various places afterwards. Then wrote. In the evening Mr.

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French republicanism’, he did not have the same legacy in England, where republicanism ‘died on the scaffold with Algernon Sidney’. Milton’s outrage against tyrants was no doubt the reason for Hollis’ idolisation.

<sup>25</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. xiv.

<sup>26</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. xiv.

<sup>27</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> Hollis, 11 June 1759.

Spong with me. Shewed him divers late purchases of *Virtù*, the two figures in bronze of M. Angelo especially, bought at Dr. Kennedy's sale, which like Cipriani & Stuart greatly admired. Read.<sup>29</sup>

These quotes demonstrate how objects were 'read' by Hollis to represent ideals he hoped to promote. While the OED defines *Virtù* primarily as a taste for curios and works of art, I argue that for Hollis this taste was bound to his philosophical ideas on citizenship and masculinity. The first quote above shows him discussing *Virtù*, along with Italy, France and politics, suggesting that he was using the word in a broader, ideological context than discussing 'purchases of *Virtù*' as seen in the second quote.

*Virtù* has been emphasised throughout the chapter because so much of Hollis' daily accounts mention the 'reading' of this material, whether by obtaining, showing off or discussion of *Virtù*. He gifted or displayed objects as a means of sharing ideas, intending that others would read them as texts: ideological vehicles driving thoughts and actions in the reader. Most of Hollis' commentary in this respect related to artefacts, art, medals and coins, rather than print. Partly, *Virtù*, according to Hollis, was material culture as an embodiment of principles. While his collection and dissemination of material objects was not an act of print circulation, it can be understood as part of an all-encompassing projection of the Hollis worldview into the public sphere. Hollis expected the receivers of his art gifts to read them in a certain way and act upon them as they would books. Material culture and books were tools necessary to influence the thinking public. Images and objects had meanings, according to Hollis' interpretations, that conveyed specific messages about *Virtù* and republican concepts of liberty associated with the seventeenth-century Commonwealth.

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<sup>29</sup> Hollis, 01 July 1760.

The case of Hollis demonstrates how reading cannot be easily isolated from the rest of the print cycle. Indeed, reading for Hollis meant involvement at all levels of print production and distribution because his vision for books was one that involved communication with others in order to spread his philosophical ideals. He believed the future success of the nation depended on a body of informed readers who would oppose tyranny in all its forms. In Habermas' public sphere of individual reason acting as a check on the government's power, Hollis fit in appropriately, particularly in his opposition to tyranny and support for citizens' rights to liberty. The print culture that was so crucial to Habermas' paradigm of the enlightened public sphere depended on educated readers, but also distributors and promoters of particular literature which would work to inform the 'public reason'. Hollis fulfilled this requirement as both a reader and producer/distributor.

Most of Hollis' recorded meetings concerned books, printing or reading specifically, other than those regarding material objects, social calls to friends, domestic business, or committee meetings.<sup>30</sup> Often the only aspect of a meeting he remarked upon was in reference to books, mainly about production or distribution, rather than their content. Again, reading cannot be removed easily from the print cycle.

Mr. Hewett with me in the morning. Presented him with Toland's life of Milton.—Dr. Templeman with me afterwards.—Looked over & sorted various old tracts.—Mr. Payne with me in the afternoon, and then Mr. Shipley. Presented a curious tract intituled "Chaos" printed London 1659 in quarto, to Mr. Fielding.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> He was particularly involved in the Society for Promoting Arts and Commerce and the Committee for the Relief of French Prisoners. These were sites of homosocial transactions.

<sup>31</sup> Hollis, 26 July 1760.



This excerpt highlights the various meetings held on a daily basis, as well as the centrality of reading material within these meetings. The giving of John Toland's *Life of Milton* was a frequent occurrence in Hollis' daily records. There are at least 21 mentions of the work in his diary between April 1759 and July 1761. The promotion of the work of John Toland is extremely significant in the understanding of Hollis' philosophy and reading.<sup>32</sup> Justin Champion has characterised Toland as a 'hero of liberty' whose work was meant to inspire the youth of the nation.<sup>33</sup> Toland was a publicist for Protestant liberties and the Hanoverian succession. Champion writes that, 'ideas were powerful instruments in the transaction of cultural politics in the period'.<sup>34</sup> Hollis' commitment to distributing Toland's work to readers in his social network demonstrates how he circulated texts in order to promote liberty as a source of inspiration.

Hollis attempted to distribute Toland's works among readers through patronage of publishers and gifting. These efforts demonstrate Hollis' alignment with Toland's philosophies of liberty. Hollis believed that the sponsorship of reading was politically influential and necessary. He collaborated with the bookseller Mr. Millar in the reprinting of *Life of Milton*, as well as in the adding of his own notes to a new edition. When Hollis ran out of his own copies after giving them to friends, he ordered more. John Milton, next to Oliver Cromwell, was one of his main heroes who embodied the ideals of virtue and asceticism that he considered necessary to live a worthy life committed to the good of the state. As suggested above, it is significant that Toland was the author. Hollis' promotion of Toland's *Milton* among his friends,

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<sup>32</sup> John Toland (1670-1722) was a freethinker and philosopher who brought together classical and republican ideals. S. H. Daniel, 'Toland, John (1670-1722)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27497, accessed 09 Feb. 2012].

<sup>33</sup> Champion, *Toland*, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Champion, *Toland*, p. 14.

was unheeding, even when Mr. Millar, the printer, told him it was not a big seller.<sup>35</sup> Hollis was determined that those in his network would read about Milton. If he approved of a book, he believed others ought to read it. This evangelicalism would bring about public improvement. Hollis' determination to spread print material among like-minded Enlightenment thinkers emphasises a culture and community of readers enabled by Hollis' books. Reading for Hollis meant sharing commonwealth books with others.

### **Sociability, Reading and Distribution**

Thomas Hollis' sociability often revolved around the gifting of books and pamphlets to friends, as well as the distributing of this material to those of common interests (fellow radicals and Whigs), those in a position to educate others (the British Museum) or those who could influence policy (William Pitt the elder). Within the formal structures of societies, print matter was critical. Hollis was very involved in the Committee for the Relief of French Prisoners, the stated purpose of which, according to the diary, being to clothe French prisoners held in London. The larger intention of the committee was to emphasise the callous attitude of the French commanders to, not only their enemies, the British, but even to their own troops.<sup>36</sup> A publication was printed describing the mission statement and activities of this committee, entitled *Proceedings of the Committee...for Cloathing French Prisoners of War* (London 1760) with an introduction by a 'Mr. Johnson' (it is not clear whether this was Samuel Johnson or another Mr. Johnson). Hollis described the approval process and preparation for the publication of this tract in his diary.

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<sup>35</sup> Hollis, 20 Jan. 1761, Hollis wrote, 'at Mr. Millar's, who says, tho I can hardly think it the truth, that Toland's life of Milton sells but indifferently'.

<sup>36</sup> Bond, *Hollis*, p. 67.

At a Committee for the Relief of French prisoners of war held at the Crown & Anchor in the Strand. Settled every thing ultimately for the intended publication; and among other Resolutions agreed that Mr. Johnson's MScript should serve as an Introduction to the Publication in the place of Mr. Smith's; and that Copies of the Proceedings of the Committee should be deposited in the British Museum, and in the several Universities of The British Empire.<sup>37</sup>

Hollis intended the production and consequent reading of this pamphlet to spread knowledge that would cause people to take political action. Cooperation within committee structures enabled print production and circulation. It is clear how reading connected to the entire print cycle through sociability. Hollis mentions the British Museum and the 'several Universities of The British Empire'. The use of these institutions demonstrates the grand scope of his plan. Hollis believed the British Museum to be a great distributor of public knowledge. On another occasion he donated an anti-Jesuit print to the museum, hoping it would be displayed clearly.<sup>38</sup> Only a widely-known and visited establishment would suitably house Hollis' gifts because such gifts were meant to be consumed by as many 'readers' as possible. The 'Universities of The British Empire' were crucial likewise as targets of Hollis' propaganda efforts. In Hollis' mind, they had power to influence people in power. Thus, the publication and intended distribution of this pamphlet demonstrates the wide scope of Hollis' plan and his intention to inspire action in as many readers as possible.

The social world and reading network of Thomas Hollis was extensive. During his European travels as a young man, he made continental connections that continued throughout his life. These made up an international network, linked to public reason, of

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<sup>37</sup> Hollis, 23 July 1760.

<sup>38</sup> See p. 170 below.

recipients for his print gifts, within a Republic of Letters.<sup>39</sup> According to Bond, Hollis donated his liberty books ‘to private persons from Linnaeus in Sweden to the Prince of Torremuzza in Sicily; to libraries in Uppsala, Copenhagen, Moscow, Berlin, Göttingen, Wittenberg, Wolfenbüttel, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and various cities in the Low Countries; and to learned societies from the Academy in St Petersburg to the Accademia della Crusca in Florence’.<sup>40</sup> Exemplifying one of many exchanges with his continental ties, Hollis wrote, ‘Signor Martinelli breakfasted with me, who being desirous of publishing something, & asking as to the manner; advised him to publish under the Shape of Letters, which if the subjects are well chosen, may be exceedingly useful both in this Country & in Italy’.<sup>41</sup> Here Hollis gave advice on textual format, advising that a collection of letters would be most suitable. The epistolary style of writing was very popular in this period so it was no doubt good advice. Hollis was once again involved in the production side of the print cycle, but he was also aware of readership. He understood which aspects of a book would appeal to the reader. Hollis enabled readers by being in touch with the print consumer, as well as using his networks to facilitate the printing and distribution of new books.

Hollis had business dealings with publishers in order to facilitate the widespread reading of his favoured books. His involvement was not ‘business’ in a strict sense, because he was not hoping to profit from his collaboration with the printing industry. He did not need to earn money through odd editing and layout jobs for publishers as he had already inherited a substantial living (though he did invest in shares). Once again, his involvement was altruistic in nature, intended to further his ultimate plan of educating and enlightening the world about the benefits of liberty through a campaign of directed reading. He was

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<sup>39</sup> See Goldgar, *Learning*.

<sup>40</sup> Bond, *Hollis*, pp. 108-109.

involved with numerous publishers throughout his life, most frequently Andrew Millar (1705-1768), but also Lockyer Davis and Charles Reymers, Thomas Cadell, Thomas Davies, John Nourse, Robert and James Dodsley, Samuel Bladon, William Johnston, Edmund and Charles Dilly, John Almon and George Kearsley.<sup>42</sup> The working partnership between Hollis and Millar is particularly prominent in the diary.<sup>43</sup> Hollis made recommendations for publications as well as helped with design. In the following instance, we find Hollis giving Millar advice on the market for books.

Met Millar the bookseller in the street, who acquainted Me, that he purposed to publish a new edition of A. Sidney upon government & hoped I would assist him in it, if capable. Commended him highly for such resolution, said that good books would always pass the greatest profit to a bookseller, if published with correctness & elegance. Assured him of my utmost assistance in that case, & appointed a meeting with him...at my lodging to consider further of the matter.<sup>44</sup>

Hollis said that correctness and elegance would achieve the 'greatest profit'. Again, Hollis was keenly aware of a potential reader's requirements for a book. Not only was correctness a necessity, elegance would make a book a more desirable product. Hollis had an aesthetic and practical interest in print production in order to influence and encourage readership.

Hollis was a true advisor to Millar, who admitted to taking advice from able judges of literature, both men and women, in choosing his copyrights.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Hollis, 04 June 1761

<sup>42</sup> Bond, *Hollis*, p. 87.

<sup>43</sup> H. Amory, 'Millar, Andrew (1705–1768)', printer. *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18714>, accessed 06 Mar. 2010].

<sup>44</sup> Hollis, 13 Sept. 1759.

<sup>45</sup> Amory, 'Millar'.

Mr. Millar, the bookseller with me in the morning. much conversation with him concerning his new edition of A. Sidney's Discourses upon government etc. Inclined to leave out of it Sidney's apology, but at my desire has promised it shall remain, as, like a very fine thing, it ought. Says will reprint Toland's life of Milton & Amintor directly; and all Marvell's works in one vol. Quarto the next summer. Both of them on my recommendation.<sup>46</sup>

Hollis made recommendations on content, as well as on selections for publication. Not only did Hollis collaborate with publishers in design and marketing, he financed printing costs of chosen books in order that these would have a wider readership. This was business, not in a moneymaking capacity for Hollis, but in the sense of an organised scheme involving close collaboration with publishers.

A quote by Benjamin Franklin underlines Hollis' manner of carrying out 'business'. Franklin wrote these words in a 1784 letter to Thomas Brand (whom Hollis' very close friend and heir), to thank him for the printed *Memoirs* of his friend. 'These volumes are Proof of what I have sometimes had occasion to say, in encouraging people to undertake difficult Public Services, that it is prodigious the quantity of Good that may be done by one Man, *if he will make a business of it* (original italics)'.<sup>47</sup> Hollis carried out his advising, designing, editing and financing within the print market as if such tasks were part of his business, in the financial sense. However, the end goal was not to make money, but to inform readers. The social relationships Hollis had to build, in this case with booksellers and publishers, made it possible to influence direct readership through the production and circulation

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<sup>46</sup> Hollis, 16 Dec. 1759.

of particular books. Franklin's quote also demonstrates his view that Hollis was engaged in a programme of 'Public Services' to bring about 'good'. Thus, Hollis was devoted to civic duty through the spread of reading material, which relied on collaboration with printers.

Beyond his involvement in print production, Hollis was a keen consumer of reading material, sometimes intended for distribution. He mentioned quite frequently attending book auctions, as well as reading catalogues to find out the latest works available for purchase. Hollis mentioned spreading 'knowledge' in 1760: 'At Osbourne's buying books from his catalogue. Undertook to forward some of his catalogues into Italy, to serve him, & to spread knowledge'.<sup>48</sup> In the following year he wrote, 'At Ford's, Auctioneer to view some pictures & books now on sale'.<sup>49</sup> The diary is filled with similar accounts of catalogues and purchasing. Hollis kept aware of the market for books, attending auctions, reading catalogues and visiting booksellers. This active consumption within the market was highly reliant on the social network built up over time. Besides critical reviews published in periodicals, word of mouth would have been the best way to stay in touch with the latest publications. Considering the fact that Hollis was so involved in print production himself, he was probably the first to discover new books released on the market. He would have obtained this information through his many informal and formal meetings with colleagues and friends who shared his passion for reading and politics.

### **The 'Plan' and the 'Gift'**

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<sup>47</sup> Taken from Robbins' essay, 'Whig', p. 408. She cites A. H. Smith, ed., *The writings of B. Franklin*, vol. IX (New York, 1906) pp. 103-105.

<sup>48</sup> Hollis, 08 Jan. 1760.

<sup>49</sup> Hollis, 15 Jan. 1761.

Hollis believed almost all his activities were necessary for his plan of enlightenment through reading. Based on his own accounts, this was the ultimate justification for most of his efforts. Yearly, on his birthday, he remarked on his efficacy in this direction, and resolved to work harder in his mission:

My Birth day. Entered the forty first year of my age. Reveiwed the transactions of the past year as they appear in these Papers. By no means content with them. My Situation disagreeable to me of late on many accounts, & likely to continue so for some time. Hope however to keep up in full spirit, to amend my plan, & to tread more firmly than ever the path of active and extensive virtue.<sup>50</sup>

The statement, 'active and extensive', does indeed characterise how devoted he was to his plan. The focus of the diary is on the daily actions he took toward the mission. He was interested in 'betterment', not only striving to achieve his own goals, but also striving to better the nation. The use of the word 'active' emphasises the mode of reading he promoted in which readers responded to books with actions.

Hollis intended his gift of John Milton's bed to Mark Akenside in order to inspire direct action in the poet.<sup>51</sup> He gave the bed anonymously along with the following message:

An English Gentleman is desirous of having the honor [sic] to present a bed, which once belonged to John Milton, & on which he died, to Dr. Akinside [sic]; and if the Doctor's Genius, believing himself obliged, & having slept on that bed, should prompt him to write an ode to the Memory of

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<sup>50</sup> Hollis, 14 Apr. 1760.

<sup>51</sup> Mark Akenside was a poet and physician most well-known for his poem, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, published in 1744. R. Dix, 'Akenside, Mark (1721–



John Milton, & the Assertors of British Liberty, that Gentleman would think himself abundantly recompensed.

Clearly, the bed was intended to inspire Akenside to write an ode to Milton along with the other 'assertors of British liberty'. Hollis gave this gift anonymously, only hoping for repayment in the form of a poem aligned to his political beliefs. This use of the 'gift' to inspire direct action in its recipient, or 'reader', was characteristic of Hollis' lifelong plan.

Where Hollis' diary does not denote intended outcomes of gifts, historians can extrapolate anticipated actions from the content of the material gifted. It is also possible to study how Hollis made his donations. Bond has already interpreted Hollis' emblems to suggest that Hollis was promoting a specific meaning of liberty and freedom from tyranny. Hollis' believed that 'if government goes right, all goes right'.<sup>52</sup> Thus, his books were to encourage those who could influence and create public policy. He believed in parliamentary reform. Furthermore, the gift of the book represented an ideology in itself, one in which reading and enlightened thought were fundamental to political change and action. Thus, the book as gift represents a particular Hollis philosophy as a reader-distributor. The content and method of Hollis' 'plan' suggests that readers were supposed to influence public policy in order to prevent tyranny.

The gift of the book was one of Hollis' characteristic tactics in the pursuit of his 'plan'. The amount of books given out was astounding. Friends, new and old, were the willing (or perhaps unwilling recipients, in some cases) of Hollis' liberty books.<sup>53</sup> These books, such as those of Milton, Sidney and Locke, appear throughout the diary as presents. He also distributed

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1770)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/263>, accessed 28 July 2012].

<sup>52</sup> C. Robbins, 'Library of liberty: assembled for Harvard College by Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 5 (1951), pp. 5-23, pp. 181-96, p. 8.

contemporary tracts. 'Presented the Speaker with Milton's Paradise regained & Samson Agonistes, in octavo, printed 1671, & rebound splendidly in morocco. Presented a variety of Persons with the publications of the Society for promoting arts and commerce', he wrote in July 1760.<sup>54</sup> The remark about bindings ('rebound splendidly in morocco') was characteristic of Hollis who was so interested in book aesthetics. The attractive appearance and presentation of books were intended to persuade readers into adopting Hollis' intended textual interpretation. Such elements would give the text more impact as well. Hollis included emblems and other imagery for the same reasons. Mentioning the publication date ('printed 1671') also suggested that the book was significant as an object with a specific provenance, from the seventeenth century, Hollis' chosen period of inspiration. All aspects of the book, its content as well as its materiality, contributed to its success or failure as a propaganda tool.

Hollis' repeated mentions of Sidney are significant. The so-called 'Commonwealthmen' promoted the work of republican thought by seventeenth-century writers such as Milton, Sidney and James Harrington.<sup>55</sup> It has been argued that Hollis belonged to this group, which was a small minority of Whigs to whom 'no achievements in England of any consequence can be credited'.<sup>56</sup> Political efficacy aside, Hollis' distribution of books by Commonwealth writers demonstrates his 'reading' of the past disseminated widely to further causes he valued. He did not necessarily read seventeenth-century writers as they would have been read in their own period. For example, by Hollis' time, Algernon Sidney was associated with the 'cause' of secular civil and political liberty, even though, in his lifetime, Sidney was

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<sup>53</sup> See p. 170 below for discussion of the anti-Jesuit print and the British Museum.

<sup>54</sup> Hollis, 22 July 1760.

<sup>55</sup> C. Robbins, *The eighteenth-century Commonwealthman: studies in the transmission, development and circumstance of English liberal thought from the restoration of Charles II until the war with the thirteen colonies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 3.

devoted to godliness.<sup>57</sup> This interpretation of the past suggests a specific reading of history used purposefully to inspire action in others. Like other case studies analysed in this thesis, readers chose and interpreted books according to personal requirements and goals.<sup>58</sup>

The list of those who received book gifts from Hollis is extensive. The Rev. Mr. J.A. Genevois, Minister of Burtigni, in the Canton of Bern, received, ‘a few books, and...five guineas to purchase the abridgment of the Philosophical transactions’.<sup>59</sup> He presented Mr. Tolcher with Toland’s *Life of Milton*.<sup>60</sup> Prose works by Milton, ‘richly bound & ornamented in green morocco’, went to Baron Stosch.<sup>61</sup> Hollis gave Mr. Justice Fielding ‘Mons. Amelot’s history of the Government of Venice 2 vol. 12° in french’ with some of Hollis’ manuscript observations included in the first volume.<sup>62</sup> In May of 1760, Hollis gave out a pamphlet to several recipients en masse:

Dr. Templeman with me in the morning to settle the Premiums for polite arts, which are proposed to be given this Year by the Society for P.A.C. for publication.—presented four copies of a pamphlet this day published intituled “Reflections of a Portuguese upon the memorials presented by the Jesuits to his Holiness Clement XIII”, which was translated from the original in Italian after a Copy sent me by Mr. James Honse of Leghorn to the following persons. The AB. of Canterbury. The Speaker. Dr. Chandler. The Rev. Mr. Fleming.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Robbins, *Commonwealthman*, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> B. Worden, *Roundhead reputations: the English civil wars and the passions of posterity* (London, 2001), p. 146.

<sup>58</sup> See especially Romantic Reader chapter on Anne Lister’s reading.

<sup>59</sup> Hollis, 19 Feb. 1761.

<sup>60</sup> Hollis, 09 Mar. 1761.

<sup>61</sup> Hollis, 08 May 1761.

<sup>62</sup> Hollis, 03 Feb. 1760.

In addition to these individual recipients of Hollis' book gifts, institutions received various books and pamphlets, often by anonymous donation. In October of 1760, Hollis made a substantial anonymous donation of books for universities in Ireland and Scotland.<sup>64</sup> To the 'University of Dublin' he sent a box containing Milton's prose works, as well as Toland's *Life of Milton*. To the 'Universities of Scotland', as well as to 'David Hume Esq. and William Grant Esq.', he sent eight copies of the new edition of Toland's work.<sup>65</sup> Christ's College, Cambridge, was a significant recipient of Hollis' presents, as it had been Milton's college. Hollis donated widely to universities in the New World, in particular sending books to Harvard. He also sent books to Yale, Princeton, Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania. Other than donating to universities and museums, he donated books to societies and other intellectual, literary, commercial and artistic groups. For example, Hollis himself 'presented the Book of the Catalogue of the things found at Herculaneum to the Society of Antiquaries'.<sup>66</sup> Hollis' gifts went to a wide range and far-flung group of people and institutions.

Beyond Britain and the American colonies, books went to Europe, in particular the public library at Bern, Switzerland, the *Stadt- und Univeritätsbibliothek*. The phrase, 'preparing books for Bern', appears frequently throughout the diary. Zürich also received Hollis donations in the form of Jesuit books. In January 1761, the British Museum rejected Hollis' anonymous gift of a rare anti-Jesuit print as it was too controversial, hence Hollis' later inclination to give similar books to the library at Zürich, rather than his national library.<sup>67</sup> This incident represents the limits of the Hollis project. While his propaganda campaign was targeted, energetic and persistent, he did not always succeed in getting his

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<sup>63</sup> Hollis, 23 May 1760.

<sup>64</sup> Hollis, 11 Oct. 1760.

<sup>65</sup> Hollis, 11 Oct. 1760.

<sup>66</sup> Hollis, 06 Oct. 1760.

gifts accepted or read in the way he intended. He could only provide readers with sources of information and inspiration, but he could not control readers' reception of his gifts. Ultimately, the reader still had the interpretive power.

The liberty-prints were the main works favoured by Hollis for financing, promoting and distributing to such people and institutions as those mentioned above. Again, the figure of Andrew Millar, book-seller, appeared prominently in Hollis' dealings with the printing industry. For example, Hollis' commissioned prints of Sidney, Ludlow and Milton by Cipriani to excite and encourage Millar in the printing of Hollis' chosen books.

Millar the bookseller with me in consequence of his appointment of this day...Shewed [sic] him my drawings of A. Sidney, Ludlow & Milton, by Cipriani, with which was greatly pleased; and acquainted him with various circumstances respecting those great personages, of which he was entirely ignorant. Millar all submission, and desirous of giving new & compleat [sic] editions of A. Sidney & Milton's prose works, & that with elegance ; subject, as he was pleased to add, to my opinions, promised to assist him cheerfully [sic] & to the uttermost, if such his views.<sup>68</sup>

Hollis usually portrayed Millar, 'all submission', as the agreeable tradesman answerable to Hollis' superior views and knowledge. Hollis 'cheerfully' acknowledged that some of Millar's books were subject to the opinions of Hollis. Hollis dictated the publication of specific books in order to further a specific cause. The following perfectly highlights Hollis' tactics within the print industry and his justification for his actions.

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<sup>67</sup> Hollis, Jan. 1761.

<sup>68</sup> Hollis, 20 Sept. 1759.

Mr. Millar with me in the morning. Engaged him to reprint (Whitby's) "Discourse of the laws made against Heretics" with such additions as shall be thought proper to bring it down to the present time; in which additions I have promised to assist him all that may be in my power for the cause sake, "THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY."<sup>69</sup>

Hollis convinced Millar to reprint Whitby's work, offering to help him using his own expertise, all in the name of the 'cause of liberty'. Hollis was closely involved in producing the book gifts that would eventually go out into the world to inspire readers to adopt his cause.

### **Reading Life and Self-Reflection**

While Hollis' social world of reading and engagement with the print industry pervades the pages of his diary, his individual reading life is less evident. Hollis devoted so little diary commentary to his own daily reading, though he mentioned it in passing regularly.<sup>70</sup> The diary does not reveal much about his choice of reading material, where he read, with whom, and what he thought about it. A few times he mentioned reading letters aloud to friends at their residences, as well as going into coffee houses to 'read the papers'.<sup>71</sup> Besides 'reading at home', reading at the homes of others and reading in the coffee house, no other locations of reading appear in the diary. As for genre, history and biography comprised his primary reading choices. The massive amount of evidence available on his engagement with print

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<sup>69</sup> Hollis, 20 June 1760.

<sup>70</sup> He usually mentioned reading in the morning or evening. See *Ideal Reader* chapter pp. 83-85, on routines of reading, as well as other case studies such as Ryder, Larpent and Lister, who mention reading routines.

<sup>71</sup> Dudley Ryder wrote of meeting in coffee houses to discuss books. See *Occupational Reader* chapter, p. 135.

production is in stark contrast to the very small amount on individual reading.

Nevertheless, Hollis can be considered a philosophical reader in a broad sense because he embarked on a mission to use the tools of text and object to spread ideology. His own reading of artefacts and print served to enlighten others. He chose publications and objects that supported his political philosophy. The texts he decided to disseminate reveals how he ‘read’ them as well. As this thesis is concerned with reading strategies, the case of Hollis demonstrates that the circulation, collecting and commissioning of material culture was an active reading strategy of Hollis. This was integral to the concept of the eighteenth-century philosopher reader who used objects, imagery and print to disseminate relevant ideas. For Hollis, ‘active reading’ meant distribution of print, and distribution of goods. He was a circulator.

It is possible to pick out some aspects of Hollis’ individual reading life from his diary. Unlike Bond’s assertion that there was only a single direct piece of evidence describing what was read (‘one mention of *Candide*’), there are actually several remarks on reading material, that, if not expansive, begin to be suggestive.<sup>72</sup> It is true that most mentions of actual reading in the diary consist of the following or similar phrases: ‘At home. Read’. Yet, in some other instances, Hollis recorded authors and insights. Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* makes an appearance in April of 1759. Hollis wrote that he, ‘review’d Hobbes’s *Leviathan* in the evening. A great genius, but his notions of government absurd, and contrary to the experience of past times, and the opinion of the wisest best men of all ages’.<sup>73</sup> He mentioned *Candide* a month later, and, as asserted by Bond, denied Voltaire’s authorship for the work being ‘too

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<sup>72</sup> Bond, *Hollis*, p. 26.

<sup>73</sup> Hollis, 17 Apr. 1759.

grossly written'.<sup>74</sup> Other famous authors and books read by Hollis included, Milton (unsurprisingly), Robertson's *History of Scotland*, Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, *Plutarch's Lives*, and Harris' *Life of Oliver Cromwell*.<sup>75</sup> Clearly, his taste in genre ran toward history and biography of his heroes. Within the comments on books read, he recorded some opinions and thoughts. His political viewpoints were mostly in evidence in such cases. Indeed, politics dominate most thoughts recorded about his reading. He considered Robertson's *History of Scotland* to be 'ingeniously written, & in favour [sic] of civil, and religious liberty', for example.<sup>76</sup> Hollis' comments on his reading reveal and complement his intentions for his evangelical mission of liberty.

Hollis was a keen Milton enthusiast, as already discussed. His reactions upon reading work by the seventeenth-century poet and polemicist ('delighted...astonished, humbled'), justified the transcription of Miltonian poetry into the diary.

Read the evening.—Hobbes's *Leviathan*. & the divine Milton on education. The last subject exhausted in one single sheet. Delighted with it, astonished, humbled.

"yet be it less, or more, or soon or slow

"it shall be skill in strictest measure even

"To that same let however mean or high

"Toward which time leads me, and the will of Heaven.

at least, I will attempt it.<sup>77</sup>

In this passage, after reading's Milton's work on education, Hollis revealed his excitement by copying an extract from one of Milton's sonnets, *How Soon Hath Time*, probably written in 1632. This poem is about the passage of time for a young man who feels an

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<sup>74</sup> Hollis, 16 May 1759.

<sup>75</sup> Hollis, 20 May 1759, 12 June 1759, 30 Sept. 1759, 1 & 2 Oct. 1759 and 2 July 1761, respectively.

<sup>76</sup> Hollis, 12 June 1759.



‘inward ripeness’. Ultimately, the narrator trusts in God’s will when his life is brought to fruition. This passage in Hollis’ diary is thus one of the few places where we find Hollis in spiritual contemplation. The choice of these lines from this poem reveal him reflecting on his own life and the passage of time, trying to accept providence, despite his active drive to create political and social change. He read one of his favourite authors in a specific way in order to reflect upon his life and his position in the world.

This level of self-reflection is similar to the mention of his birthday earlier and his assessment of progress in his mission. However, in the latter case above (‘at least, I will attempt it’) Hollis reasserts his dedication to his goals.<sup>78</sup> Still, a sense of religious resignation is clear, making the excerpt of special interest in the consideration of a man who commented on religion infrequently within the pages of his diary, as well as one who had a monomania about his ‘cause’, prioritising it above all else, worldly or spiritual.<sup>79</sup> Hollis reflected upon the position of his ‘self’ in the world through the lens of his reading, in this case, a Miltonian poem.

History books inspired Hollis. He enjoyed William Harris’ *Life of Oliver Cromwell*, considering it to be ‘much more curious & spirited than his life of C.1, & alike honest & well-intentioned’ and resolved to read it a second time.<sup>80</sup> Considering Hollis’ sympathy for the parliamentary forces in the Civil War and his devotion to the Commonwealth, it is no surprise that he enjoyed a biography on Cromwell more than Charles I. Similarly, the reading of *Plutarch’s Lives*, a classical text on morality and the lives and destinies of men seems a predictable Hollis choice, not least

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<sup>77</sup> Hollis, 29 Aug. 1759.

<sup>78</sup> John Marsh and Anna Larpent also reflected on their birthdays and the passing of time.

<sup>79</sup> Hollis was sometimes accused of being an atheist, but he was actually a rational dissenter who sometimes attended Caleb Fleming’s sermons at Pinners’ Hall. Bonwick, ‘Hollis’, *ODNB*.

because it was one of Milton's favourites also. Hollis' obsession is obvious, when he exclaims, 'Read the evening in Plutarch's lives. What Men!'<sup>81</sup> The mental world and daily actions of Hollis were characterised by an all-encompassing passion for a particular political philosophy. The reading of Plutarch and the comment 'what men!' also reaffirms the importance of a manly ideal of classical virtue (*Virtù*) for the Hollis ideology.

The reading choices that stand out, such as *Plutarch's Lives*, reveal a great deal about Hollis' character and motivations in the pursuit of his propagandist plan of readership. Hollis' reading and admiration of *Lives* demonstrates his interest in moulding himself on the characters of great men. Plutarch wrote in his *Life of Alexander*:

It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write Histories, but Lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or jest, informs us better of the characters and inclinations, than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever.<sup>82</sup>

Here Plutarch mentioned 'virtue and vice' and 'characters and inclinations'. Hollis' diary reveals him to have been relatively self-reflective, despite its detailed descriptions of tireless meetings, donations and resolutions. His interest in biographical portraits of his heroes, his idolisation of certain men from the past, indicates a desire to shape his own identity and actions based on those whom he admired. The fact that this quote also focuses on

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<sup>80</sup> Hollis, 2 July 1761. See Introduction chapter, p. 30, and Bluestocking Reader chapter, pp. 206-208, and Virtuous Reader chapter, p. 243, regarding reading volumes more than once.

<sup>81</sup> Hollis, 01 Oct. 1759.

‘characters’ rather than ‘battles’ also befits Hollis’ determination not to run for public office. He believed he could influence public change more effectively through readership and the shaping of character and understanding.

There is further evidence of Hollis’ self-awareness in his remarks on a book called *Leisure hours employed in benefit of those who wish to begin the World as wise as others end it*, which was a conduct manual.<sup>83</sup> There is a tantalising mention of a psychological meditation in response to this work:

Visited in the morning, dined at a Tavern with Mr. Brand. In the evening read a book intituled “Leisure hours employed in benefit of those who wish to begin the World as wise as others end it” in which is this Maxim “Sameness in amusements appears ridiculous to lookers on; and yet it should seem that the person so amused, must be happy by not seeking to change, were it not constantly followed by a pressure upon the spirits.—This, in degree, my own case.<sup>84</sup>

Hollis reflected on his own monotonous fixation on the life plan and its potential harm to his peace of mind. This small mention is an intriguing insight into his awareness of the all-consuming nature of his project. Such a meditation gives us a glimpse at an internal world that is too often out of reach even in sources of life-writing. Like the lines of Miltonian verse, this comment is telling in its revelation of self-awareness, discovered through the process of reading. Hollis depicted himself here almost as a victim to his own evangelical mission. Even though Hollis, who carried out ‘sameness in amusements’ must have been ‘happy’, because he

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<sup>82</sup> From A.H. Clough, ed., *Life of Alexander, Dryden translation*, (1864). This sentiment very much agrees with Hollis’ life philosophy of honour and virtue detached from great political success.

<sup>83</sup> *Leisure hours employed in benefit of those who wish to begin the world as wise as others end it* (London, 1759).

<sup>84</sup> Hollis, 15 May 1759.

did not change, he was plagued still by a 'pressure upon the spirits'. His books promoted self-awareness of his situation and life goals. Many other readers contained in this thesis also used their books as mirrors to reflect on their own situations, often in the exploration of feelings.<sup>85</sup> Reading was thus contemplative and often 'therapeutic', in a modern-day sense, as it helped readers to understand their own lives.

Hollis' treatment of his own tracts, books, prints and objects reveals further insights into his individual reading life. They were all material manifestations of his worldview that he read in relation to liberty. Books and objects were organised and retained within his personal collection for the same purpose: to honour and propagate the cause. For example, he arranged medals in his cabinet in a particular way, similar to a bookcase. Hollis stated in his diary that he, 'sorted my medals anew for my new cabinet. Like the plan of my collection more than ever. –In honor to Liberty, Science, Art, and ingenuous men. O may the general plan not derogate from this'.<sup>86</sup> He displayed his medals according to genre as books were organised in a library. Once again, he mentioned his passion for 'ingenuous men', implying his reverence for specifically masculine ideals. Just as he arranged objects like print, he gifted print and objects together, showing the interchangeable meaning of these materially different items. In July of 1761 Hollis described himself as, 'busy this day chiefly in preparing a set of books, tracts, & prints intended as a little present, with a noble glass vase of the Britannia, as stands on the side board of my Table, for Baron Stosch, on his Return to Florence'.<sup>87</sup> Again, he grouped print and objects together as representative of ideology. Hollis' individual reading of all these

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<sup>85</sup> See chapters on Edmund Harrold, Dudley Ryder, Catherine Talbot, Anna Larpent and Anne Lister for further examples.

<sup>86</sup> Hollis, 16 Apr. 1759.

<sup>87</sup> Hollis, 20 July 1761.

items signifies that in both his gifting and own collecting, materials signified ideas and they could be 'read' as text.

## **Conclusion**

Thomas Hollis represents a different brand of eighteenth-century male reader to the occupational male reader. Whereas the group of men examined earlier displayed traits associated with an eighteenth-century middling masculinity that involved training, as well as community and familial practices of religious devotion, sociability and financial responsibility, Hollis' world of the book was dedicated to a more singular, philosophical and political mission of enlightenment. Syllas Neville shared Hollis' world of ideas, but he fits in the 'occupational men' category as he trained as a physician and he did not dedicate himself to spreading ideas in the same manner as Hollis. Hollis' active reading revolved around his cause, whereas for Neville it related to his profession and his daily routines. The difference between the two men exemplifies the larger distinctions between male reading for political and philosophical ideals and reading to manage career and family.

Masculine occupational reading and philosophical reading differed in their content and outcomes. Hollis, like the men in the previous chapter, was an active reader, but he based his reading choices and his handling of print and objects, on political ideals. The professional and middling men were more concerned with day-to-day living and improving their situation in the world. Hollis was financially and socially secure and his aspirations revolved around a singular cause of improving the state through collective readership. The male diarists discussed in the previous chapter read textbooks on specific skills subjects such as medicine, law and divinity. Hollis' reading choices contained examples of canonical texts of the Commonwealth. In some senses, the Hollis

project of textual consumption can be understood as representative of an erudite Republic of Letters, in which ideas were discussed and disseminated amongst a learned (specifically classically-trained) community. Professional and middling men's reading choices were more utilitarian. However, this overly simplistic distinction overlooks significant complexities. The previous chapter contained examples of erudite reading among middling men, such as John Cannon, who aspired to be 'learned', even while lacking a university education.<sup>88</sup> Syllas Neville complained of Linneaus' lack of classical training.<sup>89</sup> Dudley Ryder planned to incorporate the reading of 'Roman authors' into his daily schedule.<sup>90</sup> Thus, erudition and the accumulation of career-relevant knowledge were not mutually exclusive, but rather different and equally desirable categories of masculine reading in the eighteenth century.

The distinction lay in men's ultimate goals for their reading. Hollis was not aiming to further a professional career. He read and distributed books in the name of enlightenment, which operated as a propaganda tool. Thus, classical learning, seventeenth-century ideology and an antiquarian leaning characterised Hollis' print consumption. The occupational men, on the other hand, aspired to improve their positions socially and economically. As John Cannon wrote, 'everyman...is the builder of his own fortune'.<sup>91</sup> Self-educated, Cannon's books were the tools which would build his fortune. Practical skills were more necessary than lofty ideals. Still, Hollis was very proactive with his reading, and he was not the pedantic recluse as characterised by some of his contemporaries. The books he read, commissioned and distributed were part of a concerted effort to spread ideas, encourage republican and some Whig philosophy. Hollis' activity of reading

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<sup>88</sup> SHC, Cannon, DD/SAS/C1193/4, p. 31: 'Socrates says that knowledge and ignorance are the origine and beginnings of good & evil'.

<sup>89</sup> See Occupational Reader chapter p. 111-113.

<sup>90</sup> See Occupational Reader chapter p. 108.

was intended to give rise to other things (ideas and inspiration), but this goal was different to that of the other male readers studied: self-betterment.

As Habermas has famously theorised, the eighteenth century was the age of the emergent public sphere in which private people came together to form ‘public reason’ as a check on state power. Some gender historians have also used this model to conceptualise a division in the lives of men and women in history. However, the ‘separate spheres’ theory has been shown to be flawed.<sup>92</sup> This is particularly the case in the question of readership and Thomas Hollis is the perfect example. Hollis is ‘famous’ for his privacy and anonymity. However, his life purpose was to influence public opinion and policy, to educate and enlighten, to, in fact, form ‘public reason’, in Habermasian terms. How does a bifurcated paradigm explain someone striving to stay in the ‘private sphere’, shying away from political power, while simultaneously working to influence the ‘public sphere’? At the same time, he was a ‘private *man*’, contradictory to gendered notions of public influence. He even used anonymity, an aspect usually emphasised in histories of women and print, as his chosen *modus operandi* when it came to gift-giving. While Hollis complicates typical renderings of separate spheres from the male side, notable examples of eighteenth-century women authors, such as Elizabeth Montagu (discussed in the next chapter), complicate the models from the female side. Thus, the now-outdated model collapses again.

The best way to understand Hollis as a masculine ‘type’ is through his understanding of the concept of *Virtù*. For Hollis, *Virtù* meant civic duty in terms of citizenship. This could be read as an irreconcilable gender division, in which women could not be citizens. However, the division was not so clear-cut. *Virtù* for

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<sup>91</sup> SHC, Cannon, DD/SAS/C1193/4, p. 62.

<sup>92</sup> See Introduction chapter p. 48.

Hollis was about public service within a political state in which formal power-holding was unavailable to women. Yet, Hollis never took office and he acted to influence public opinion through the world of print in ‘private’, in a retirement from society, or a state of *Otium*—Augustine of Hippo’s definition of retirement used for a noble purpose, particularly study.<sup>93</sup> Although *otium* meant ‘intellectual leisure’, it did not mean idleness and one could use it in preparation for public service. Hollis seems to have embodied this conception of privacy in aid of the public good, and it was in this sense that his acts of *Virtù*, the sharing of ideology through reading, was carried out. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, eighteenth-century social critics adopted the sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers who theorised about classical notions of *Virtù* in the eighteenth century, railing against commerce and luxury as degenerative, feminine dangers to society. Hollis’ admiration for Algernon Sidney suggests he was of these views. His choice of *otium*, attempting to influence others’ reading and shape his own individual reading of objects and print, represents an embrace of masculine *Virtù* in a culture that Hollis believed had become corrupt. Furthermore, *Virtù* for Hollis related to his political philosophy about liberty and freedom from a tyrannical monarchy. Citizenship meant duty to the state through acts of public good. His acts were comprised of the enlightenment of others through reading about contemporary social, cultural and political ills.

The life-writing examined so far in this thesis reveals that eighteenth-century male reading was sociable in nature. Shared male print engagement was associated with societies and clubs. The Republic of Letters also involved extensive epistolary communication containing discussions about books and literary

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<sup>93</sup> ‘otium, n’: Leisure; free time; ease. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third edition, September 2004; online version December 2011. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/133269>>; accessed 09 Feb. 2012. An entry for this word was first included in *New English Dictionary*, 1903.



journals. Thomas Hollis' networks were far-flung, stretching beyond his home country. The movement of print within these correspondence links reveals an international community of like-minded readers. Hollis aimed to inform a wide sphere of readership, which would be responsible for the future liberty of the state. He relied on sociability and shared reading to pursue his goals. Texts were central to his life mission. Reading allowed men to strive for practical and ideological goals, whether they were in the trades, the professions or philosophical networks. As will be shown in the next three chapters, reading also propelled women ahead in their lives, allowing them to fulfil their own social, professional, personal and familial aims.

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Bluestocking Reader**

The mid- to late-eighteenth-century group of cultural icons and literary women identified as the bluestockings practised reading for action, which was critical to their successes.<sup>1</sup> Individual and social reading enabled intellectual and cultural achievements in the public sphere. While most bluestocking historiography focuses on courageous authorship, both published and manuscript, this chapter explores reading habits. Without access to books and libraries, classical education, reading networks, the mutual support of friendships and conversation groups, the bluestockings could not have achieved authorial success. Active, extensive reading was necessary for the achievement of good writing. The writing of these women cannot be understood without a contextual framework of their reading practices.

The reading practices of Catherine Talbot (1721-1770) and Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) expose the rich world of bluestocking print consumption. This chapter will focus on the literary culture of reading, rather than publication and authorship, which has been scrutinised by much existing bluestocking historiography. Catherine Talbot was the most reluctant of the bluestockings to be known as a writer, though she did write poetry and essays. She had few publications compared to some of the others in her circle, but her reading was exemplary of the bluestocking literary culture. Elizabeth Montagu, known as the 'Queen of the Blues' presided over literary salons at her London home first in Mayfair Hill Street and later in Portman Square, published a defence of Shakespeare against Voltaire in 1769, provided patronage to fellow women writers in her circle and network, managed a coalmining business upon her husband's

death and kept up an extensive correspondence with friends and like-minded intellectuals, writers and artists of the day. The literary experiences of Talbot and Montagu provide important insights into genteel women's reading.

These two figures have been selected from the bluestocking group because Montagu represents one of the most famous, while Talbot was one of the lesser-known names. At the same time, both had a close friendship with Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806), fellow bluestocking and historian, tying them together in a double case-study chapter neatly.<sup>2</sup> Talbot and her reading world comprises the first half of the following discussion, followed by an analysis of Montagu from the same perspective. The chapter will conclude with a comparison of the two to show that an extensive culture of reading enabled bluestocking successes. This reading was necessary for them to fulfil their goals of public and networked authorship.

### **Bluestockings and the Historians**

Historiography on the bluestockings has evolved over the last two hundred years. Editors of their letters in the nineteenth century tended to locate the women within the domestic sphere, emphasising their Christian philanthropy and education.<sup>3</sup> Despite Amelia Opie's efforts in *Detraction Displayed* (1828) to highlight the achievements of the bluestockings, Thomas De Quincey's verdict in 1852 labelled the group as a 'feeble minority' of mannish women, 'not simply obsolete, but even unintelligible to our

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 31, for definition of 'reading for action'.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806) was a poet, translator and writer. Talbot and Secker encouraged her in her translation of *Epictetus* (1758). J. Hawley, 'Carter, Elizabeth (1717-1806)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004); online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4782, accessed 26 Mar. 2012].

<sup>3</sup> See Pennington, *Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu*; Montagu, *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*; M. Pennington, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of Elizabeth Carter*, 2 vols. (London, 1808); J. Doran, *A Lady of the Last Century: Illustrated in her unpublished Letters* (London, 1873); and Hester Chapone, *The Works of Mrs*

juniors'.<sup>4</sup> According to Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg, this marked their disappearance from the literary canon and cultural history of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> It was not until second-wave feminism of the 1970s and 1980s that the rediscovery of women's writing was accelerated and politicized, particularly with works such as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal *The Madwoman in the Attic*.<sup>6</sup> Finally, in 1990, with the publication of Sylvia Myer's research on the bluestocking circle, the time was right for reconsideration, setting the stage for Pohl's and Schellenberg's 2003 edited collection, *Reconsidering the bluestockings*.<sup>7</sup>

The feminist rediscovery of women's writing has newly emphasised the important literary achievements of previously forgotten women writers, but this chapter highlights the current need to focus on the reading cultures within which the pathways were forged. Works such as Roger Lonsdale's *Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry* (1989), Andrew Ashfield's *Romantic Women Poets* (1995), along with work by Nancy Armstrong, Janet Todd and Catherine Gallagher, amongst others, have highlighted the importance of the woman writer in the literary marketplace in this period.<sup>8</sup> Jane Spencer, in *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986), has also shown women's force in this

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*Chapone: To which is prefixed an account of her Life and Character drawn up by her own family, 4 vols.* (London, 1807).

<sup>4</sup> A. Opie, *Detraction displayed* (London, 1828), pp. 264-66, as referenced in Pohl and Schellenberg, *Bluestockings*, p. 8. See T. de Quincey's characterisation of the bluestockings in his *Autobiographic sketches: selections grave and gay, from writings published and unpublished* (Boston, 1853), as 'mannish' and a 'feeble minority'. Also, S. H. Meyers, 'Learning, virtue and the term "Bluestocking"', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 15 (1985), pp. 279-88, p. 286 and Pohl and Schellenberg, *Bluestockings*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Pohl and Schellenberg, *Bluestockings*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> S.M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination* (New Haven, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> Also, see Clarke, 'Bluestocking fictions', and K. O'Brien, 'Catherine Macauley's Histories of England: a female perspective on the history of liberty' in Knott and Taylor, *Enlightenment*, pp. 523-537.

<sup>8</sup> See N. Armstrong, *Desire and domestic fiction: a political history of the novel* (New York, 1987); J. Todd, *The sign of Angelica: women, writing and fiction, 1660-1800* (London, 1989) and C. Gallagher *Nobody's story: the vanishing acts of women writers in the marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994).

arena, along with their significance as readers.<sup>9</sup> More work is necessary in the field of women's reading history to contextualise the successes and achievements of the authorship of the bluestockings, to understand the cultural and intellectual milieu within which they moved.

Furthermore, the story of the literary woman needs to depend less on the story of the novel as a grand narrative. As already suggested, novels were only a small portion of the publishing market and readers' print consumption habits. The overemphasis on novels in the historiography skews the genre's actual influence in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the fixation on women as novel readers and writers reproduces prescriptive and satirical commentary from the time, rather than exploring the real relationship between women and their books in the period. This chapter promotes the arguments made by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton about the 'activity of reading', which was always goal-orientated and tended to give rise to something else.<sup>10</sup> Talbot and Montagu read with active purpose, in order to produce a positive effect, that of learning and literary accomplishment. This approach led to authorial success as an outcome of their shared culture of print consumption.

### **The Life of Catherine Talbot**

Catherine Talbot was notable as a woman reader involved in a community of female intellectuals, critics, authors, artists, poets and conversationalists. She wrote poetry, essays, allegories, and dialogues but published little during her lifetime.<sup>11</sup> Still, her work and literary efforts would not have been possible without her

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<sup>9</sup> J. Spencer, *The rise of the woman novelist: from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford and New York, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Jardine and Grafton, 'Studied for action', p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> She published some pieces in the *Athenian Letters* (1741 and 1743), the *Rambler* and probably the *Adventurer*. After her death, Elizabeth Carter published two

reading habits, intellectual networks, educational background and her access to books. The Church of England played an important role in Talbot's family background. Her father, a clergyman, died before her birth, so she and her mother went to live with Thomas Secker, her father's former colleague.<sup>12</sup> Secker taught Catherine scriptures, astronomy and languages, and through his connections, she became involved in social and literary circles in London.<sup>13</sup> He became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1758, and the Talbots moved with his family to Lambeth Palace. Upon his death, they inherited a large legacy.<sup>14</sup> The early support of Talbot's education was critical to her literary success.

Talbot is a useful case study because one diary of her time spent staying with her friend Jemima Yorke (Marchioness Grey) at Wrest Park in Bedfordshire in 1745 still exists.<sup>15</sup> This diary provides an idea of routine and daily reading habits, particularly social reading amongst friends. To supplement this source, excerpts from letters published in the online database entitled British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries, have been used. Specifically, the research is based on an 1808 published collection of letters written from 1741 to 1770 between Talbot and Elizabeth Carter.<sup>16</sup> The focus is on letters written by Talbot to Carter from Cuddesdon or London whilst the former was living with Thomas Secker's family in Cuddesdon (a village in Oxfordshire) in the summer, the deanery of St. Paul's in the winter, or later, when

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of her works. Her collected *Works* were edited by M. Pennington (1808), along with *Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Secker (1693-1768) was archbishop of Canterbury. Jeremy Gregory, 'Secker, Thomas (1693-1768)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2012 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24998>, accessed 13 June 2012].

<sup>13</sup> For more on Secker, see R. G. Ingram, *Religion, reform and modernity in the eighteenth century*:

*Thomas Secker and the Church of England* (Woodbridge, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Pohl and Schellenberg, *Bluestockings*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>15</sup> Jemima Yorke (1722-1797) was a letter-writer and also lived under Thomas Secker's guardianship. This connection brought her into contact with Talbot who became her lifelong friend with similar reading habits. J. Collett-White, 'Yorke, Jemima, suo jure Marchioness Grey (1722-1797)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/68351>, accessed 25 Mar. 2012].

Secker was Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth Palace. Letters from Carter to Talbot whilst the former was at her family home in Deal, Kent, have also been used. These letters contain the most elucidating commentary on the two women's reading practices. In conjunction with sources used for Elizabeth Montagu, this combination of manuscript diary and published letters for Catherine Talbot provides an excellent platform for a dual case study of the bluestocking readers.

The following discussion of Talbot's reading habits highlights how reading formed a basis for dedicated friendship. The diary provides evidence of this relationship with Jemima Yorke, as do the letters in relation to Elizabeth Carter. Reading together was a social activity. In addition, opinions about books and suggestions for books allowed a relationship to flourish even when two friends were apart from one another. Bluestocking readers shared encouragement, support and helpful criticism. Such an intellectual friendship allowed Talbot, Yorke and Carter to be successful as thinkers, intellectuals and writers. Furthermore, the use of one another's private libraries while visiting friends allowed for varied reading choices. While Talbot was at Wrest Park she was able to borrow extensively from the books held there, for example. Social relationships facilitated rich opportunities for reading.

### **Times and Spaces of Talbot's Reading**

Talbot's diary describing her visit to Wrest Park in 1745 provides many details of shared reading between herself and Jemima Yorke. When Jemima married Philip Yorke in 1740 and moved to Wrest Park, Talbot grieved the separation.<sup>17</sup> Her stay with the family in the spring of 1745 was a happy one in which Talbot and

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<sup>16</sup> Pennington, *Elizabeth Carter, BIWLD*.

Yorke spent many hours in conversation and reading. Indeed, so much of Talbot's diary focuses on their reading (as well as writing) and discussions, it is clear that the printed world was integral to the enjoyment of the visit for both parties.

Catherine Talbot often referred to the daily reading routines in the diary. Typically, the women read different books in the evening, compared to in the morning. Although reading was not always a joint activity, it was in the case of social evening reading. Talbot frequently mentioned reading Homer as a group before going to bed. On 3 June 1745, she wrote that, 'the afternoon was rainy, we play'd, we writ, we read, supper; Homer & Eleven o'clock came in their usual Order'.<sup>18</sup> Three days later she recorded, 'in the Evening we had Billiards, Books & Tea, Chess, & last of all Homer'.<sup>19</sup> The diary contains nine other mentions of reading Homer, always in the evening, socially and close to bedtime. This routine reading was characteristic of the entire stay at Yorke's house and it suggests that shared reading was a daily habit while visiting, similar to the eating of meals at the same time each day. It is also critical to note that Talbot mentioned the reading of Homer. This emphasises the bluestockings' immersion in the classics such as the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Sociable reading and classical texts, with which such women would be familiar, characterised Talbot's stay at Wrest Park.

In the morning, Talbot's regular reading consisted of theological works, which she read alone: 'Before Breakfast I read my usual Books'.<sup>20</sup> On 30 May she explained, 'good Spirits. rose soon after 7. Serious Books & Thoughts'.<sup>21</sup> She was interested in books by writers like the early seventeenth-century clergyman and anti-Jesuit, Mr. Chillingworth, whom she considered 'full of

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<sup>17</sup> S.S. Lanser, 'Bluestocking sapphism and the economies of desire', in Pohl and Schellenberg's *Bluestockings*, pp. 257-75, p. 263.

<sup>18</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 03 June 1745.

<sup>19</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 06 June 1745.

<sup>20</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 10 June 1745.

<sup>21</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 30 May 1745.




sense',<sup>22</sup> and Edmund Calamy, nonconformist minister, whose sermons she liked 'very well'.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Talbot read works by Bishop Hall, thought to be controversial by his contemporaries; also known as a satirist and a moralist author of devotionals.<sup>24</sup> Morning pious reading was another significant aspect of Talbot's reading routine while at Wrest Park.<sup>25</sup>

Even though morning pious reading was more an independent exercise than evening reading of Homer, the digestion of spiritual thought provided topics for discussion between Talbot and Yorke. They advised one another on how to lead a good life, a practical goal of all religious reading studied in this thesis. Talbot wrote that Yorke encouraged her not to grow 'gloomy and indifferent', but to love 'the spirit of life'.<sup>26</sup> Talbot was philosophical about 'life' in general, her thoughts influenced by her religious studies:

Illness & Death. So many Generations are one after another passing off the Stage that the life of every single Person seems a trifle. Nothing so insignificant as this Life considered by it self. But considered with a View to the vast dispensation of Providence it becomes (each single life) an important part of an amazing whole. The time will come

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<sup>22</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 29 May 1745.

<sup>23</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 02 June 1745. Edmund Calamy, a nonconformist minister and historian, was famous for his publication of the details on the lives of the ejected clergy during a time of upheaval for non-conformity in the seventeenth century. In his autobiography, he wrote of his early life of preaching in which he waited until, 'Providence opened a way to some fixed and settled work'. E. Calamy, *An historical account of my own life, with some reflections on the times I have lived in, 1671–1731*, ed. J. T. Rutt, 2nd edn (London, 1830). D. L. Wykes, 'Calamy, Edmund (1671–1732)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4357>, accessed  17 July 2012]. Talbot's comment about providence below seems to echo that of Calamy.

<sup>24</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter about the prescription against women's reading of controversial theology, p. 81.

<sup>25</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter on religious reading routines, as well as Virtuous Reader chapter.

<sup>26</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 03 June 1745.

when every single Circumstance of things here will Appear to have had its Eternal Reasons.<sup>27</sup>

The observation about many generations passing ‘off the Stage’ was a profound one. Yet, the conviction that life had a purpose made clear as part of ‘an amazing whole’, was a hallmark of providential philosophy. The reading of sermons by such people as Dr. Calamy, whom she was ‘much pleased with’, seem to have affected Talbot’s reflections on the world, along with the spiritual advice of her friend.<sup>28</sup> Talbot was grateful to Yorke for setting right her ‘errours [sic] of Temper’.<sup>29</sup> Friendship and pious reading allowed for self and philosophical contemplation.

Spatial details provide another relevant framework for Talbot and Yorke’s reading practices. There are multiple references to closets and libraries in Catherine Talbot’s diary. Sometimes the women read alone in these spaces, while other times they retreated together. The closet, as described in the manuscript, was a place for retreat, contemplation and study. Catherine visited Jemima in her closet: ‘We went at last into A’s (*Jemima’s*) Closet & there sat down to read. A Letter from Home, from Eng. Kind and Entertaining to a high degree restored me some spirits. We afterwards finished the first Book of Mr. Locke’.<sup>30</sup> Talbot mentioned the library more often than the closet, as another place for reading, as well as borrowing books to bring to one’s room.<sup>31</sup> At Wrest Park, the library was a communal setting for reading, in addition to a place where tea drinking took place.<sup>32</sup> Here Talbot and Yorke read aloud together, or with others. Talbot recorded, ‘in the Library pursued our usual Variety of Studies. I read Abp. Laud’s strange Journal (poor man) of Dreams. Some

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<sup>27</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 02 June 1745.

<sup>28</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 04 June 1745. See footnote 23 above.

<sup>29</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 08 June 1745.

<sup>30</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 07 June 1745. The mention of Locke signifies an interest in philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 47, on the house library.

passages in Ld. Clarendon, & Aloud some of Erasmus' Eloge.de la Folie, which sure is highly entertaining'.<sup>33</sup> The reading mentioned by Talbot during her visit to Wrest Park took place within doors, in rooms conducive to contemplation, study and pleasurable reading. Friendships such as that of Talbot and Yorke allowed for social visits to different houses and the use of various comfortable spaces for reading.

It is interesting to note the mention of the Renaissance text, *Éloge de la Folie*, the French title of Erasmus' famous work, *The Praise of Folly* (1511). This was an influential text in the Protestant revolution. Its mention demonstrates the legacy of scholarliness within bluestocking reading, including ancient classics and Renaissance thought, itself containing many allusions to the classics. Talbot said *Éloge de la Folie* was 'highly entertaining', pointing to the satirical nature in part of Erasmus' essay, and demonstrating her enjoyment in reading. Talbot enjoyed scholarly and classical reading, important elements in bluestocking success as well-known authors in the period.

Reading during the visit to Wrest Park also took place within Talbot's or Jemima Yorke's own room, or apartment. The women's own rooms were the locations for morning reading alone, but they were also the situation for joint reading. Talbot wrote, 'after Chapel I went with A to her Apartment which is gayety & elegance itself. There we studied Le Theatre Italien very merrily, & turned our own piece into French'.<sup>34</sup> Reading took place in both a semi-social space (the library) as well as a semi-private space (one's room or closet), suggesting that reading for the women was both a collective and individual experience.<sup>35</sup> One emphasis in this chapter, like the other chapters, is on sociability as it was the shared nature of reading which gave the women power as authors.

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<sup>32</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 09 and 10 June 1745.

<sup>33</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 05 June 1745.

<sup>34</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 05 June 1745.

Conversations or epistolary exchanges enhanced the reading experience, and the homes of friends provided spaces conducive to fulfilling reading.

### **Social Pressure and Gender**

Within the spatial and temporal environments just mentioned, there was a social and cultural pressure on Talbot to fill her time with ‘serious things’.<sup>36</sup> She made this clear in the following remark on one evening’s activity: ‘Afraid of being call’d to an Account for my time. Writ two Sonnettos (abusive) in five Minutes & produced as my Evening’s Work’.<sup>37</sup> Here Talbot was concerned with potential critics and less supportive acquaintances than Yorke. She believed in intellectual hierarchies, and judged herself for not living up to them.<sup>38</sup> She berated herself for not having serious thoughts when she said, ‘Dryden a Fine Reasoner in Poetry. His *Religio Laici* a Most Poetical Sermon, the beginning vastly Fine.<sup>39</sup> My own Meditations, rather Girlish’.<sup>40</sup> Talbot’s comment on her ‘girlish’ meditations reveals a slight sense of insecurity about her talents, suggesting she struggled with her role as a woman poet in an intellectual world dominated by men.

Talbot referred to her embattled position, as well as to her own ambivalence, believing that her detractors saw her as a ‘Phoebe Clinkett’, the fictional lady poet satirised by John Gay and Alexander Pope. Despite her attempts to ‘live like a plain Common-Sense Creature’, she thought people compared her to a character whom she despised.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter, pp. 82-83, on closets and Introduction chapter, p. 47, on libraries.

<sup>36</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 30 May 1745.

<sup>37</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 30 May 1745.

<sup>38</sup> See Virtuous Reader chapter in which Larpent comments on intellectual hierarchies (‘more for a magazine’), p. 255.

<sup>39</sup> John Dryden’s *Religio Laici, Or a Layman’s Faith* (1682) promoted Christianity against Deism.

<sup>40</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 28 May 1745.

<sup>41</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 11 June 1745.

I contributed my share to the Conversation, but took care that it should be a mighty quiet one, & neither talked of books nor *Bel Esprit*...Yet still I find the World will look upon me as a Phoebe Clinkett. Did they but know how I despise, how I detest the idle Character, the Malicious Commendation...They make themselves vastly merry with the numberless Persecutions I undergo, & my hatred to this detestable fame.<sup>42</sup>

Talbot took care not to talk of books in an attempt not to appear overly literary (as the maligned female pedant) or as a *bel esprit* (an intelligent, witty person). She recognised the contemporary critique of the female intellectual. This excerpt also shows Talbot's dislike of fame, quite different to the attitude of Elizabeth Montagu. For Talbot, some of the social pressures of the literary scene were negative and misogynist.

At other times, Talbot was more positive and confident in her position as a poet. She spoke about her opinion of satire:

For Naturally I hate Satire. I believe it is generally the satire upon dullness & insipidity that offends me, for Vice can never be lash'd too severely, Nor can Imprudence & wilfull Folly have too strong a Lesson of Shame & Confusion—in this View methinks I could write Satires my self. But to sit down in Cool Blood & abuse an honest worthy Man because he has write a dull Book...This blackening all the World & Mauling so unmercifully all poor inconsiderable Authors is what I can forgive neither to Boileau nor Pope.<sup>43</sup>

She felt assertive enough in this comment to criticise Pope and Boileau, two renowned names of the time. She also asserted that

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<sup>42</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 11 June 1745.

she could write her own satires, if she wished, as 'Imprudence & willfull Folly' was to be chastised. Here Talbot was much more confident. She believed it was unjust to criticise authors just because they were 'dull' or 'inconsiderable', but argued that those who were imprudent deserved it. Talbot demonstrated her literary assertiveness and criticism. She would not forgive 'Boileau or Pope', a famous French seventeenth-century poet and Alexander Pope. Here Talbot did not shy away from expressing a strong opinion on the genre of satire, as well as ethical authorship. Talbot expressed these confident opinions in the diary. Unfortunately, diaries do not represent verbal conversation necessarily.<sup>44</sup> Still, the wording out of thoughts and feelings in a diary would have had an impact on conversation. Writing, speaking and reading were interrelated in eighteenth-century ideas of education and politeness. Writing and reading could be methods for practicing verbal conversation. Thus, an opinion expressed in a diary would have had an impact on conversation, whether it was expressed in the same way or not. Conversation between intimate friends could perhaps have an even closer likeness to opinions in diaries.

Talbot gained support from friendships supported by reading. Yorke and Talbot read famous poems together, and wrote poetry together. On 30 May, after Talbot wrote the two abusive sonnets as evidence of her 'Evening's work', she then wrote another, 'at the instigation of A'. This created 'much Mirth' between the two women.<sup>45</sup> The 'instigation' of Yorke had enabled Talbot's own efforts in writing. The culture of reading shared between the two women, as well as mutual encouragement, supported literary creation even in the face of potential public criticism and misogyny.

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<sup>43</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 10 June 1745.

<sup>44</sup> See *Virtuous Reader* chapter, p. 255-256, for further discussion of this topic.

<sup>45</sup> BLARS, Talbot, L31/106, 30 May 1745.

Catherine Talbot had the support of another literary friend and author, Elizabeth Carter. Carter and Talbot were very close friends and wrote letters frequently. As a bluestocking, Carter was one of the most published of the group, producing poetry, essays and a translation of *Epictetus*. Carter's nephew, Montagu Pennington, published a lengthy series of letters between Carter and Talbot, detailing extensive involvement in print culture, in 1808. Regrettably, some of the original letters were not preserved, and, as with any edited publication, there was the potential for censorship. *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot from the Year 1741 to 1770: To Which are Added Letters from Mrs. Carter to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Vesey between the Years 1767 and 1787* (London, 1808) will be used to supplement Talbot's 1745 diary and elucidate her reading habits further.<sup>46</sup>

### **Talbot and Elizabeth Carter**

Talbot and Carter discussed frequently the books they had read, were reading, or planned to read. In letter after letter, one or the other recommended a book or asked for suggestions on what to read next. The recommendations came with each woman's review as well as commentary on learned and polite opinion. As bluestockings, Talbot and Carter were especially entrenched in a rich culture of letters firmly cemented to the world of print. Their correspondence reveals a long-distance relationship based around literary discussion. Carter and Talbot did meet from time to time, but the majority of their lives was spent apart. The access to the printed word served as a tie between the two. Reading the same books together formed a common bond.

Talbot and Carter discussed a famous novel by Henry Fielding published in 1742, *Joseph Andrews*, or *The History of the*

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<sup>46</sup> This source was taken from *BIWLD* on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

*Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*. The novel was written in part as an attack on perceived literary faults mid-century, particularly from Samuel Richardson and the unrealistic sentimentality of the famous novel, *Pamela*. Joseph Andrews was Pamela's brother, a minor character in Richardson's book. Fielding identified Colley Cibber, actor, playwright and Poet Laureate, as a culprit of bad taste also. Talbot and Carter had a keen interest in Fielding's parody of Richardson and Cibber. Talbot wrote the following to Carter in June of 1742:

I want much to know whether you have yet condescended to read Joseph Andrews, as I am well assured the character of Mr. Adams is drawn from one in real life: if the book strikes you as it did me, you will certainly come up to town next winter, that you and I may join in contriving some means of getting acquainted with him.<sup>47</sup>

Talbot suggested that the character of Mr Adams was based on a real person. She hoped Carter would make a visit soon to enjoy the society of such a person, or similar persons. Carter, in response, wrote in August, 'I have not yet seen Joseph Andrews, but shall be very impatient till I do, as I am so strongly prejudiced in favor of it by your recommendation; I intend to look over the two last volumes of Pamela, which I have yet had no sort of inclination to'.<sup>48</sup> Talbot's positive assessment of the book encouraged Carter to read it as well. Carter wrote that she would now read more of *Pamela* thanks to Talbot's recommendation. In a later letter, Carter said:

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<sup>47</sup> Talbot. Letter from Talbot to Carter, 01 June 1742, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D009. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Carter, Letter from Carter to Talbot, 04 Aug. 1742, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D010. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.



I must thank you for the perfectly agreeable entertainment I have met in reading Joseph Andrews, as it was your recommendation that first tempted me to enquire after it. It contains such a surprising [sic] variety of nature, wit, morality, and good sense, as is scarcely to be met with in any one composition, and there is such a spirit of benevolence runs through the whole, as I think renders it peculiarly charming.<sup>49</sup>

Carter's positive assessment ('variety of nature, wit, morality, and good sense') was in agreement with Talbot's good opinion of the book. The excerpt reveals that it was indeed Talbot's suggestion that led to Carter's reading of *Jonathan Andrews*, and therefore how recommendations from friends influenced bluestocking reading patterns.

Talbot and Carter continued to discuss the Fielding/Richardson literary conflict throughout the correspondence. The two women compared opinions on *Tom Jones* versus *Clarissa*, for example.<sup>50</sup> After Talbot criticised *Tom Jones*, Carter wrote this in response, defending Fielding in 1749:

I am sorry to find you so outrageous about poor Tom Jones; he is no doubt an imperfect, but not a detestable character, with all that honesty, good-nature, and generosity of temper. Though nobody can admire Clarissa more than I do; yet with all our partiality, I am afraid, it must be confessed, that Fielding's book is the most natural representation of what passes in the world, and of the bizarreries [sic] which arise from the mixture of good and bad, which makes up the composition of most folks. Richardson has no doubt a very

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<sup>49</sup> Carter, Letter from Carter to Talbot, 01 Jan. 1743, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D012. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>50</sup> *The history of Tom Jones, a foundling* (1749) was a comic novel by Henry Fielding.

good hand at painting excellence, but there is a strange awkwardness and extravagance in his vicious characters.<sup>51</sup>

Here Carter admired the 'natural representation' found in Fielding's work, compared to the 'extravagance' of Richardson's characters. Such exchanges reveal Talbot and Carter's involvement in contemporary literary debate, as well as a keen interest in dissecting famous novels. The reliance on one another's thoughts was crucial for this engagement. Literary debates in cultural circles, such as salons, required up-to-date knowledge and opinion on the latest publications. Bluestocking relationships enabled the transmission of such knowledge necessary for participation within the polite public sphere.

Each woman prized the other's opinion on her reading. Talbot and Carter trusted each other's taste. They debated the merits or failings of books, in a manner similar to formal literary review. Book recommendations were reasons for writing. They supplemented a steady stream of exchanged literary commentary. With so much shared interest, as well as respect and support for each other's literary opinion, it is no wonder that the friendship flourished for so long, or that both women found success as authors. In 1743, Talbot sought reading advice from Carter:

I should think myself extremely obliged to you...if you could recommend any book to us...there is nobody's taste I would sooner trust than your's. This is another reason for your writing to me very soon, and if you do not, you have no idea how much you will mortify.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Carter, Letter from Carter to Talbot, 20 June 1749, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D092. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 05 Oct. 1743, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D017. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

Talbot wrote here that she trusted Carter's taste above that of anyone else. She implored that Carter write to her very soon, explaining that the book recommendation was a reason for writing. Again, the opinion of friends was valued highly.

Talbot and Carter's engagement with literary culture gave them wide access to books. They were quick to read the latest publications. Talbot wrote again in 1743 (my italics) that, 'not that I should excuse myself for writing in the unmeaning style, since in that I should but have copied the tip top book *that has come out this winter*, "The History of the Family of Y very".<sup>53</sup> Recent publications were discussion points.<sup>54</sup> In a later letter, dated 1744, Talbot wrote, 'have you read the *new* Fables, writ in the manner of Gay, but I think more agreeably?'<sup>55</sup> Talbot used the word 'new', demonstrating up-to-date print consumption. The immediacy of print access was characteristic of time spent in London. Letters communicated crucial information at such times. When one of the women was away from London, a letter from her friend could inform her of the latest published books, along with the requisite opinion on whether it was worth reading. The importance of the metropolis in the question of access is undeniable. Booksellers in London were more likely to have the latest books because the region was the centre of publishing. In January of 1747, Talbot asked Carter about her access to books in Canterbury, near to where Carter maintained her permanent residence at Deal, in Kent, 'Have you any bookseller at Canterbury who is furnished with these new things as they come out?'<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 23 May 1743, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D015. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>54</sup> The examples of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* reveal this as well. Similarly, Anna Larpent was able to read Jane Austen novels soon after their publication. See *Virtuous Reader* chapter p. 242.

<sup>55</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 07 Sept. 1744, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D026. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 03 Jan. 1747, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D058. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

Talbot seems to suggest that Canterbury would not have the latest publications that were available in London.

Access to booksellers while away from London was questionable, and news on recent publications was less assured.<sup>57</sup> In the Talbot-Carter correspondence, the letter acted as a news report on new books, as well as a literary review. Catherine Talbot felt it a duty to inform friends of new books just published. She wrote to Carter in 1745: 'So much for books, it is but fair I think to mention the general character of those just published to one's friends at a distance'.<sup>58</sup> The reporting on recent publications was, at times, exactly like a review of books, complete with snappy editorialising. For example, in 1755:

There is a whole shoal of new books. The Centaur, well worth reading I think; Theron and Aspasia, too grave, I am afraid, to be much read; the Bishop of London's second volume of excellent Sermons; Dean Swift's poor and conceited account of his Uncle, with some few things in it one likes to see. Of the Novels of the winter I know little. The Worlds of this winter are admirable. Man is a serious Paper, but a dull one.<sup>59</sup>

Talbot mentioned a 'whole shoal of new books', including six works ranging from clerical publications to novels. The sharing of opinions of books between friends served the practical purpose of informing each other which books to read, as well as which books were recently published. Friendship networks thus acted as

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<sup>57</sup> However, the growth in newspaper circulation throughout the eighteenth century meant that book reviews and listings could be read increasingly all over the kingdom.

<sup>58</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 02 Mar. 1745, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D031. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 07 Feb. 1755, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4456-D069. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

literary support systems and ultimately contributed to women's successes as writers, authors and intellectuals.

Talbot and Carter read, discussed and contributed to periodicals like the *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *The Rambler*. Carter was a friend of Edward Cave, the editor of the *Magazine* and began contributing pieces herself in 1734. Her work was also printed by Samuel Johnson (to whom she was introduced by Cave) in *The Rambler* in 1750 and 1751. Talbot and Carter's discussions about literary journals comprised another pillar of their friendship supporting mutual textual consumption and production. Carter tried to keep *The Rambler* going by encouraging new readers and contributors, including Hester Chapone and Talbot herself.<sup>60</sup> Talbot also encouraged Carter in her contributions to this journal. She gave her approval of a potential submission by Carter to the *The Rambler*. The publishers printed this in number 44 (18 August 1750). Talbot wrote to Carter, 'the Vision is much approved with its present preface, and will make an excellent *Rambler*... The poem on Melancholy, with a Greek motto, is also wished to be sent to the *Rambler*'.<sup>61</sup> Talbot persisted in her warm encouragement of Carter's writing for *The Rambler*. The following festive suggestion not only demonstrates Talbot's support for Carter's publishing efforts, it describes a vivid picture of the fashion and season in December of 1750:

I do really now wish you would write a cheerful paper to the *Rambler*. Whether on Christmas merriment as laudable; and the town madness, and that of the age of continual joyless dissipation as illaudable -- or on the hoops of these days, compared with those of the Tatlers, &c. and so on all sorts of caps, bonnets, aigrettes, coloured capuchins, &c.

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<sup>60</sup> Hawley, 'Carter', *ODNB*.

<sup>61</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 28 May 1750, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D104. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

&c. &c. on drums -- on the improvement, and misuse of the stage, and the French *comedies larmoyantes*, -- or on any thing or nothing.<sup>62</sup>

The varied, colourful collection of topics (from morality to fashion to theatre) demonstrates that Talbot would be happy whatever Carter wrote. 'Any thing or nothing' was sufficient. The writing of journal content and the shared discussion of journals was a significant aspect bluestocking reading which propelled their successes.

Mutual support and discussion of authorship, both within and without journals, runs throughout the Talbot-Carter correspondence, though Carter felt much more confidence in authorship. Talbot, hesitant herself, encouraged Carter to write more: 'Or if you had rather aspire to the character of an author, pray write me some plain books that shall be just on a level with the capacity of my farmers and spinners, and weavers'.<sup>63</sup> Carter and Talbot also discussed Charlotte Lennox who published her most successful poem, 'The Art of Coquetry', in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>64</sup> Such journals operated as more than just vehicles for publication. Journals were also texts to be discussed, shared and circulated amongst the bluestocking writers.

### **Talbot and the Circulating Library**

The Talbot-Carter correspondence contains evidence of engagement with another new development in the history of

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<sup>62</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 17 Dec. 1750, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D110. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 06 Jan. 1745, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D030. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

eighteenth-century print culture: the circulating library. Some historians cite the Reverend Samuel Fancourt as the originator of the first circulating library.<sup>65</sup> Keith A. Manley, however, has shown that the circulating library had a precedent, though Fancourt was definitely the first to popularise and promote the idea of the subscription library.<sup>66</sup> Talbot and Carter were involved in the planning for this library. For example, in 1745 Carter wrote to Talbot, 'Do you know anything about a scheme for a library by one Mr. Fancourt?'<sup>67</sup> In the same year, Talbot wrote in response:

You exerted very properly, in refusing poor Mr. Fancourt's wild scheme. While he was talking it over to me, I was unhappily too civil to find out the absurdity of it, (for I believe it is but a silly one, though I know two or three sensible people who have subscribed.) I did not indeed promise to subscribe, but I gave him hopes that if it was generally approved of I would.<sup>68</sup>

This excerpt reveals the importance of subscription in the development of libraries. While subscription libraries were set up through the financial support of their members, the circulating libraries were often set up as adjuncts to pre-existing businesses

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<sup>64</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 26 Nov. 1750, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D108. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>65</sup> R. Ballaster, *Seductive forms: women's amatory fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford, 1998), p. 37. Samuel Fancourt (1678-1768) was a librarian and Presbyterian minister. His mid-century circulating libraries was a mixed model of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century subscription libraries and circulating library businesses in the eighteenth century. M. Little, 'Fancourt, Samuel (1678-1768)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9128>, accessed 03 May 2012].

<sup>66</sup> K.A. Manley, 'The road to Camelot: lotteries, the circle of learning, and the 'circular' library of Samuel Fancourt', *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 8 (2007), pp. 398-422. For more on library history, see, Allan, *Nation of readers*; J. Raven, 'Libraries', as well as the Introduction chapter pp. 45-47.

<sup>67</sup> Carter, Letter from Carter to Talbot, 20 Sept. 1745, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D038. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 1745?, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D039. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

like bookshops. It is not clear here whether Fancourt was in the process of an early form of a circulating library, or the older version of a subscription library, or some combination of both. The establishment of libraries was news worth discussing, especially considering how Fancourt valued Talbot's opinion on the scheme. The development of the library in particular was a topic of interest for readers of the day because access to books was critical for the literary discussions to flourish. The greater selection of books available, the more readers such as Talbot and Carter could choose reading material of interest. That freedom of choice made the recommendations from one another necessary. The recommendations and availability of books in libraries also prompted the acquisition of books for one's own collection, again furthering one's ability to author one's own work.

Talbot wrote of a visit to a library in Italy:

I have lately met with a most dire disappointment that I must tell you. In one of the Bibliothèques, I read an abstract of a little Italian book, written by M. Bandiera, *Trattato degli studie delle donne*, and was vastly pleased with the justice he seemed inclined to do us, in asserting our claim to some degree of understanding, and capacity for improvement; already had I determined to send for the book out of Italy on purpose, when in the second part, he takes it into his head to forbid our reading poetry, and dancing, the two entertainments that of all others I have a passion for. After all, I think I must get the book, and like just as much of it as suits my humour, and not regard the rest.<sup>69</sup>

Talbot was pleased partly with the Italian author's acceptance of women's 'capacity for improvement', but she was disappointed by



his prohibiting the reading of poetry or dancing. Despite her hesitations, Talbot still wanted to obtain this book. The anecdote demonstrates that literary women gained freedom of reading selection through borrowing from a range of libraries, more so than if they were limited to reading simply from private collections. Talbot and the other women mentioned in this thesis had wide access to books and could therefore read according to their interests. The development of circulating as well as the use of private libraries made accessibility much easier and ultimately helped the bluestockings in their literary pursuits.

### **Flexible Reading: Intensive and Extensive**

There were a variety of reading modes available to the women studied. Both men and women read strategically in this period. Within the 'little Italian book', Talbot chose what to read according to what suited her. In the explanation below, Talbot compared a particular book to a 'heap of sketches', saying that it was to be enjoyed as a 'school of excellent thoughts' rather than 'a complete thing in itself'. Talbot and other readers read books flexibly, according to individual needs. The freedom to read in a manner not intended by the author came with a greater availability of books and exposure to different genres. The flexibility of reading strategies meant that bluestockings like Talbot were critical readers, engaged in dissecting and assessing texts, rather than just absorbing according to authorial intent. Talbot explained her analysis of one book in a letter to Carter in 1750:

Do not suspect me of having ever got so far in Dr. Hartley as the *vibrationunculettinettos*; I only read the most taking title pages; and in the second volume I am sure you will find

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<sup>69</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 17 Dec. 1743, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D019. Accessed from BIWLD on

many things to be charmed with...I mentioned this book rather as a school of excellent thoughts than a complete thing in itself, like what the painters call a studio, a heap of sketches, some of them very strange, that well studied might produce the most admirable pieces.<sup>70</sup>

Talbot described her method of reading certain title pages only, as well as her opinion that the work was not a complete thing but rather a collection. While some books were read as collections of 'sketches', others were read repeatedly, with close attention paid to the whole.

In the historiography of reading, some historians have associated this type of reading with pre-1750 practices, when fewer books were available and thus read repeatedly. The less intensive reading of many books, maybe only once each, is associated with a later development, post-1750.<sup>71</sup> It is relevant that Talbot reads in both ways, suggesting that the 'intensive' and 'extensive' reading modes probably co-existed at this time for those with wide access to books. Typifying the older trend, Talbot enjoyed reading some books five or six times. She philosophised that reading a book more than once was the only way to stop time:

Not a new book has shewed its head this century; but the comfort is, old ones will bear reading over very often, and in truth I think there is full as much pleasure in reading a very excellent book the fifth or sixth time, as if one had it fresh from the press. One's curiosity is too eager and hasty at first, but afterwards one is at leisure to dwell upon the beauties; one has a general idea of the whole, and can stop

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22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>70</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 17 Dec. 1750, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D110. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>71</sup> See Engelsing, 'Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte' and Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser*. Also, Hall, 'Literacy in New England'.

at what particular part one pleases. Nay one has a joy of a peculiar kind, in life one is unwilling to part with an agreeable moment because one knows it will never come again,

"Relentless time no mortal power Can stop, or stay  
his flying speed, Swifter than thought he runs, he  
flies, The present hour for ever dies."

but in books one can almost do this, and by turning back to a fine passage recall the pleasure of the first moment when one will. I am experiencing this in Milton and Dante. Indeed the last, as it is but my second time of reading him, I am by no means mistress of yet.<sup>72</sup>

This flexibility in reading tactics was an opportunity for Talbot to get what she wanted from the books. She mentioned the 'beauties' of a whole book, and having the leisure to dwell on enjoyable passages for a long time. She took joy in revisiting passages and remembering the first time reading it, as well as mastering literary masters such as Milton and Dante. Readers could choose whether to read intensively or extensively according to what suited them.

Talbot mentioned repeat reading on other occasions. Sometimes she wondered whether a second reading would increase her appreciation of a work, for example.<sup>73</sup> She also wrote of questioning the 'heart' of Alexander Pope after each repeat reading of his work.<sup>74</sup> Talbot described the 'pleasure' of reading a

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<sup>72</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 29 July 1745, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D034. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>73</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 28 Dec. 1747, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4455-D074. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>74</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 16 Aug. 1751, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4456-D015. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

work one was fond of oneself with others who had yet to read it.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Talbot read works repeatedly, as well as one time only. She determined her own practices of print consumption, using flexible modes of reading. While repeat reading improved erudition, Talbot described it as a 'pleasure'. The bluestockings strove for erudition as much as their male counterparts. They also considered repeat reading a pleasurable choice. Enjoyment and attention to the process of reading furthered their talents as authors themselves. Talbot was an active reader, digesting text according to her chosen methods and interpretations.

Talbot did acknowledge that misinterpretation of reading by ignorant people could be dangerous. She also thought authors should take some responsibility for the way they presented their arguments.

To-day I have been reading with due wrath and abomination "Le Philosophe Sans Souci." Some lines in that wickedest of all books are so evidently taken from the wrong reasonings of the ungodly in the Wisdom of Solomon, chap. 2, that I confess to me they are perfectly harmless, but I tremble to think what mischief they will do in the fine world.<sup>76</sup>

While the freedom afforded by book accessibility allowed bluestockings to read casually or seriously, focusing on parts of books that interested them, Talbot was concerned that others would fillet some books incorrectly. Fear of the misleading of others was similar to the fear some commentators' felt towards women reading unsuitable texts: the anxiety that culture could be consumed in the 'wrong' way and thus influence behaviour or

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<sup>75</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 21 July 1753, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4456-D048. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>76</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 08 May 1760, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4456-D115. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

thoughts negatively. 'Le Philosophe Sans Souci' refers to the work, *Oeuvres du Philosophe de Sans-Souci*, by Frederick II of Prussia, published in 1760. Frederick aspired to the platonic ideal of the philosopher king. He also admired and had a close friendship with Voltaire, sharing in intellectual exchange with the French enlightenment thinker. Talbot, no doubt, worried about the French radicalism of this book. She was concerned about how the 'wickedest of all books', one containing French intellectual ideology with which she disagreed, would be received by other readers who were perhaps less educated and more susceptible to being swayed by any idea read in a book.<sup>77</sup> Again, Talbot's education and literary wisdom aided her own literary activities, even if she was cautious about the danger of textual misinterpretation by others.

Talbot and Carter's exchanges concerned expected literary genres of the classics, history and politics, novels and some poetry, but they did not discuss theology. This seems to point, once more, to the possible difference in function of pious reading. As mentioned earlier, Talbot did her pious reading alone in the morning before breakfast. Reading as devotional practice thus seems to have been a different sort of print consumption than the other categories. It was an example of 'performative' reading in which the action and routine was an essential aspect of religious practice. However, friends still shared thoughts on Christianity with one another. As mentioned earlier, Jemima Yorke tried to encourage Catherine Talbot to lead a cheerful life. The difference in pious reading and secular reading, it seems, was that readers incorporated the former into a spiritual routine each day, more so than secular reading. Reading was a daily habit, but non-religious genres and books were consumed at more varied times. Religious reading was more consistent and regular. This pious routine

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<sup>77</sup> These fears were similar to those analysed in the Ideal Reader chapter in which the misinterpretation or misreading of bad books could corrupt sensitive minds,

allowed bluestocking women to reflect on each day and their position in the world, as well as contemplate biblical teachings. Such contemplation was similar to the practical purpose of middling men's reading: the provision of perspective and solace.

The distinctive function of devotional reading lends credence to historical arguments about the routine nature of reading for eighteenth-century women.<sup>78</sup> Just as readers read books flexibly according to individual interests, reading during different times of the day could serve several separate purposes. Morning reading, such as spiritual study before breakfast, could focus one's mind on the day ahead, before daily stresses could interfere. Likewise, evening reading could create a calm, social atmosphere in which to relax in polite company after busy days. During Talbot's stay with Yorke, the women read Homer before bedtime as a group activity. It is not clear why they chose Homer, but perhaps, as a classic, it was something upon which everyone could agree. It would not have been controversial in the same way that a more contemporary piece might have been. Polite society relied on mutual enjoyment in a party and consideration for others' comfort.<sup>79</sup> Controversial topics would have upset a pleasant social environment before bedtime. Again, readers chose reading routines to suit individual and social needs. For the bluestockings, these routines benefitted their own writing efforts as published figures.

### **'The Considering Drawer': Materiality and Review**

Material aspects of Talbot's reading life benefitted her literary achievements also. Talbot had a 'considering drawer'. It acted as an eighteenth-century 'inbox' in which she kept papers, particularly drafts written by Carter, for eventual consideration. In

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particularly women's minds.

<sup>78</sup> See Tadmor, 'Reading', p. 165.

Dena Goodman's work on the eighteenth-century writing desk, Goodman writes that:

The most distinctive feature...was the locked drawer in which letters received could be securely stored. The locked drawer signifies the importance of privacy to epistolary practice, but it also reminds us that to write letters was to engage in correspondence, that to write letters was to engage in intersubjective communicative practice.<sup>80</sup>

Talbot's 'considering drawer' represents not only epistolary communication, but also the drafting and editing process shared within the bluestocking network. Amusingly, Talbot often remarked on the inevitable loss of documents to her 'considering drawer' when they stayed inside for too long. She wrote to Carter:

Mrs. Montagu has explained to me this morning, what I suspected indeed, and what I hoped from some hints in your Tunbridge Letters; but I want to know the particulars from yourself. What size is the volume intended? What additions will there be to the manuscripts I have seen? And how is one to get a sight of the dedication? I want to know all this and every thing you can tell me, before I make the consultation Mrs. Montagu tells me you are anxious should be made. But when I have your answer I will not put it into my *considering* drawer, "from whose *bourne* few manuscripts return," but send you some sort of reply within a week or ten days.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See discussion of politeness in Ideal Reader chapter, pp. 68-71.

<sup>80</sup> Goodman, *Letters*, p. 200.

<sup>81</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 26 Sept. 1761, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4456-D136. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

Here we find Talbot questioning Carter about the dimensions and scope of the manuscript. She reveals that she hopes to read over the manuscript from Carter. The ‘consultation’ suggests that she planned to read it over as an editor to offer advice and feedback. The importance of the considering drawer here was crucial as a physical storage space for manuscript management. It aided in the circulation of manuscripts between bluestocking women. Its existence also emphasises the role of peer editing and review within the network. Talbot mentioned the considering drawer in 1760 as well. Again, she regarded it humorously, as a space in which manuscripts accumulated, much like today’s office desk inboxes: ‘I ought to have sent you this heathen Greek a fortnight ago, *but it had got into my considering drawer*, so you are in luck it ever got out’.<sup>82</sup> In all, there are seven mentions of this ‘considering drawer’ throughout the correspondence, along with Talbot’s regrets for its inefficiency and consumption of manuscripts.

An eighteenth-century ‘inbox’ is a material manifestation of the literary exchange and shared reading between the two women. Written work was kept in the ‘considering drawer’ for eventual perusal. The circulation of manuscripts for friends’ consideration was characteristic of the Talbot-Carter relationship. Because both women were involved in publishing to some extent, the critical review of one another’s work acted as helpful proofreading. Thus, the reading relationship was not only composed of opinions of books read in common, it also acted as an editing system for Talbot and Carter’s own work.

In the following, Talbot apologises for her delayed review of a work of Carter’s intended for the *Rambler*, blaming it on the void of the ‘considering drawer’. ‘Well, but seriously now, can any body imagine why I have not written to you? Why honestly your *Rambler*, which is very pretty, has got into my considering drawer,

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<sup>82</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 03 Nov. 1760, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4456-D127. Accessed from BIWLD on



from whence nothing ever comes out again under half a year'.<sup>83</sup> The 'considering drawer' also demonstrates the central place of manuscript circulation for reading and sharing amongst the bluestocking network. New bluestocking historiography has conceptualised authorship as being more than just publication, suggesting that the creation of manuscripts and circulation of letters was a form of authorship amongst many literary thinkers and writers of the period. Clare Barlow has argued that authorial identity did not require publication. She writes that, 'Authorial identity can therefore be traced through a wide variety of sites: not only publication and manuscript circulation, but also letter-writing, social interaction and involvement with literary projects of others'.<sup>84</sup> The 'considering drawer' as a feature of manuscript circulation signified peer review between bluestockings which benefitted their own writing.

### **The Life of Elizabeth Montagu**

Elizabeth Montagu is the second bluestocking reader considered in this chapter. Source material for studies of Montagu and her circle is vast. There are 6,923 remaining letters, the majority housed in San Marino, California. A large portion of these has been published. Soon after Montagu's death, her nephew Matthew Montagu published a selection of her letters written between 1734 and 1761.<sup>85</sup> Many letters from this publication have been reproduced in the online database, 'British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries'. As Elizabeth Eger has pointed out, Matthew Montagu submitted these letters to a cautious editorial process,

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22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>83</sup> Talbot, Letter from Talbot to Carter, 19 Jan. 1751, in *Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, S4456-D001. Accessed from BIWLD on 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>84</sup> Barlow, 'Female writers', p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> Montagu, *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*. Footnote taken from, Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, p. 1vii.

omitting elements of Montagu's correspondence.<sup>86</sup> A new revised and supplemented edition of letters was later published in 1906 by Montagu's great-great-niece, Emily J. Climens. The problem with that collection, explains Eger, was the editor's 'tendency to cut the letters randomly, and often brutally'.<sup>87</sup> Eger herself has attempted to ameliorate these shortcomings in her edited work entitled *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785, Volume 1, Elizabeth Montagu* (London, 1999). In this work, Eger has chosen a selection of writings, and preserved, 'integrity, spelling and punctuation'.<sup>88</sup> The Montagu letters are extensive, so a selection has been chosen for this chapter.

Source material analysed here includes original letters held at the Huntington Library, photocopies held by the British Library of original letters, Eger's edition, as well as *BIWLD*, which contains 286 letters authored by Montagu (the editorial omissions of Montagu's nephew do not affect the arguments made here). Correspondence used here includes letters between Montagu and Ann Calvert Anstey (1732-1812), wife to the poet, Christopher Anstey; Mary Anstey (d. 1754), mother of Christopher Anstey; Sarah Robinson (1720-1795), Montagu's sister; Anna Laetitia Aikin Barbauld (1743-1825), fellow bluestocking, poet and essayist; William Freind (1715-1766), dean of Canterbury; Edward Montagu (1692-1775), Montagu's husband; Elizabeth Carter; Hannah More; and Thomas Lyttelton (1744-1779), libertine and politician. Montagu writes from her Berkshire estate, Sandleford, Bulstrode Park in Buckinghamshire, Tunbridge Wells, her house in Hill Street, and other locations in London. In these particular letters, Montagu discussed books as objects, learning and education, advise for fellow women writers and the sharing and discussion of reading content. I have chosen to focus on excerpts from these letters because they illustrate Montagu's reading

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<sup>86</sup> Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, p. 1vii.

<sup>87</sup> Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, p. 1viii.

culture of accessibility to books, education, literary sociability and networking.

Montagu's circle was composed of a network of readers and writers. Those who attended her assemblies or conversation parties, which began in the 1750s, were often male and female published authors and members of the mid- to late-century London intelligentsia, primarily from the more prosperous, educated classes of society.<sup>89</sup> Montagu herself had been educated in classical and English literature and history and had learned Latin, French and Italian in her youth, tutored in particular by her grandfather, Conyers Middleton, librarian of Cambridge University.<sup>90</sup> Later in life, she became a published author with a famous defence of Shakespeare against attack by Voltaire. In 1742, she married the wealthy owner of coalmines and estates in Northumberland, Yorkshire and Berkshire, Edward Montagu. The bluestocking parties took place in the glamorous Montagu household in London. Famous figures such as Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, David Garrick and Horace Walpole attended the gatherings, at which card playing and drinking were banned and witty conversation and polite sociability were encouraged. Montagu had a wide network of successful literary and cultural figures whom she often hosted at her conversation parties.

A primary function of the assemblies for Elizabeth Montagu was to foster and support the efforts of women writers, as well as further the cause of education for women, which was being championed by some women and men writers in the second half of the eighteenth century. Elizabeth Carter received support and encouragement through her close friendship with Montagu.

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<sup>88</sup> Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, p. 1viii.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Eger has studied bluestocking conversation, arguing that the link between speech and writing had more 'urgent implications' for female intellectuals than male in this period. Eger, 'Conversation and community', p. 290.

<sup>90</sup> 'Biographical sketches of principal bluestocking women', compiled by A. Miegou, in Pohl and Schellenberg, *Bluestockings*, pp. 25-39, p. 30.

Authors such as Hannah More, Frances Burney, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Sarah Fielding, Hester Chapone and Anna Williams also received patronage, promoted by Montagu during their attendance at her gatherings and within their epistolary networks. These women, primarily prosperous and educated, were more likely to have had a classical education than most women at this time. Furthermore, as Susan Staves has shown, some of the circle had connections with clergymen who provided access to books and education.<sup>91</sup> Women's education in this period differed to men's, as the subjects it encompassed were more numerous and varied, with less emphasis on Greek and Latin. While some commentators and present-day historians have considered this a less serious form of learning, Michèle Cohen has questioned the implied inferiority of girl's learning just because it was domestic rather than in a formal school.<sup>92</sup> Montagu's diverse and dedicated reading of other languages, as well as history and literature meant that she could be a successful reviewer of Shakespeare. The education of the bluestockings was a key factor in their success as authors, along with their access to books and reading practices, sustained by friendship networks and mutual encouragement.

Elizabeth Montagu inhabited a world in which learning, reading and writing were integral to daily life. However, unlike Anna Larpent, whose literary pursuits took place at home and within her family, hidden from a wider audience, Montagu consumed and produced writing in a more public forum. Montagu and her fellow bluestockings shared enlightened conversation and exchange based on reading, in which gender equality of the mind was possible. Men and women discussed ideas on the same footing. Meanwhile, Montagu authored a work herself, with her

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<sup>91</sup> Staves, 'Clergy', p. 88.

<sup>92</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter, p. 63. See Cohen 'The mother'. Here, Cohen discusses how mothers could be the idealised figures of moralists and educationalists when it came to the domestic education of daughters, but they could not be the ideal mothers of sons. Domestic education was considered too effeminate for boys. See also Cohen, 'Girls' education'.

*Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear, compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets: With Some Remarks Upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire*, first published anonymously, in 1769. The run of a thousand copies quickly sold out. She was reluctant to put her name to the piece at first, unsure of its success and afraid she would overstep the bounds of female propriety.<sup>93</sup> However, the fourth edition of 1777 appeared under her name and she evidently enjoyed the publicity received from authorship. There is no doubt that by this time in her career, Montagu was one of the most powerful figures in London literary life, on a level footing with Samuel Johnson, with whom she had a somewhat competitive relationship.<sup>94</sup>

### **Montagu and Learning**

Montagu herself realised the benefit she had received from her education. She said in a letter to her husband Edward in 1751, 'though the education of women is always too frivolous, I am glad mine had such a qualification of the serious'.<sup>95</sup> Her letters are packed with opinions on the classics and history, the 'serious' subjects no doubt implied here.<sup>96</sup> She thought history had not given Tully the recognition he deserved, suggested the study of 'statesmen, heroes, lawgivers' for history-lovers, she looked forward to reading of the Christianization of Rome in Nathaniel

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<sup>93</sup> Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, p. 1xx-1xxi

<sup>94</sup> Another angle of Montagu's public persona, which should not be overlooked, was her role as a business woman, involved in the maintenance and success of her husband's mining enterprise, which was left to Elizabeth upon his death. Elizabeth Child has written about this aspect of Montagu's life and found it compatible with the bluestocking programme for a women's duty in the world, the idea that female virtue lay 'in a woman's social usefulness rather than only her private learning or morals'. E. Child, 'Elizabeth Montagu, bluestocking businesswoman', in Pohl and Schellenberg, *Bluestockings*, pp. 153-174, p. 167. See also, Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, p. 1xxiii.

<sup>95</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Edward Montagu, 30 Aug. 1751, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4951-D037. Accessed from BIWLD on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>96</sup> While Montagu was proud and celebratory of her own learning, she said that, 'Providence did not seem to design women for thinking beings, & those amongst them who are so usually pay a severe fine for it', HL, 03 Jan. 1750, Sandleford. Letter from Montagu to Sarah Robinson. MO 5716. This comment was related to health. Learned ladies, according to Montagu, usually paid for it with bad physical health.

Hooke's *Roman History* and complained that Enrico Caterino Davila's history rushed through events too quickly before the reader could digest the material.<sup>97</sup> While staying in the Kentish countryside in 1751, she said she was soothed and amused by 'Patriot Cicero and the Courtier Horace'.<sup>98</sup> Like all those in her circle, she read assiduously and discussed famous works in letters to friends and in her parties.

The marriage of conversation and education was vital. Indeed, the right education entailed the acquisition of verbal ability. It demonstrated that one understood and could express ideas based on a digestion of reading. Thus, one was not just 'bookish', a collector of books or a book fetishist, one was actually 'learned'. Montagu stated in a letter to her husband that 'books in the head, are better than books in the library'.<sup>99</sup> In another letter to William Freind, Montagu wrote about the difference between bookishness and the truly learned. She complained about book collectors, who did not actually acquire knowledge.

Have you conversed so long with the curious as not to know there is a difference between loving books and loving reading? How many buy books they do not care to read; others read books they do not care to buy. Some men are learned amongst the great, but many more of them may properly be said to be bookish...They buy manuscripts who cannot write, and classics, though they cannot read; they empty their pockets without furnishing their heads, and by

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<sup>97</sup> See Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Lady Margaret Cavendish-Harley Bentinck, Duchess of Portland, 2 Aug. 1741, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4949-D059. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011. Also, Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Frances Glanville Boscawen, 16 Oct. 1749, S4951-D026. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011. Also, Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Gilbert West, 26 Nov. 1752, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4951-D046. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011. Also, Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Edward Montagu, 13 June 1753, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4951-D053. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>98</sup> HL, 02 Oct. 1751, Hayes (Kent). Letter from Montagu to Edward Montagu, MO 2248.

their search after knowledge, as well as Solomon, teach us that that also is vanity.<sup>100</sup>

In some ways, this was an attack on the book collecting practices outlined earlier in the thesis, an attack on those who merely accumulated books to stock their libraries, but did not actually 'learn' from them. There was a difference between 'loving books' as objects intended to show off and collect, and 'loving reading', knowledge. She mentions the 'curious'. This suggests the word, 'curios', which were objects similar to those collected by Hollis. Again, Hollis could have been a source of criticism due to his unusual, obsessive predilection for collecting such objects.<sup>101</sup> Truly learned men were those who had digested their reading and did not simply spend money on acquiring many volumes. Montagu asserted that true knowledge required industry, which wealth and book purchasing alone did not achieve. To be 'learned', one had to be dedicated to reading and not just possess a large library.

One could not be 'learned' without access to books, of course. It was important to 'furnish' one's head with thought and the active digestion of text. In some ways, the criticism of 'curious' men who collected, was actually a criticism of the polite pursuit of antiquarianism as explored by Rosemary Sweet.<sup>102</sup> This distinction between pedantic collecting of books and the truly learned featured in much commentary about reading.<sup>103</sup> Ideal education, according to Montagu, was a wide-ranging full absorption and processing of knowledge acquired through active reading. This was erudition. It was not the polite practice of collecting curios or

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<sup>99</sup> HL, 29 July 1751, Tunbridge Wells. Letter from Montagu to Edward Montagu, MO 2234.

<sup>100</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu, 1741?, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4950-D002. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>101</sup> See Philosophical Reader chapter, p. 151.

<sup>102</sup> R. Sweet, 'Antiquaries and antiquities in eighteenth-century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34, (Winter 2001), pp. 181-206.

<sup>103</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter and Occupational Reader chapter.

the veneration of the local past. Thomas Hollis, as explained in Chapter Four, was famous for his antiquarian hobbies of coin and object collecting.<sup>104</sup> His role as a virtuoso of antiquities distinguishes him from Montagu who found such men 'bookish' and vain.

Montagu's access to books was vital to her success. As mentioned above, Montagu was educated in classical and English literature and history and had learned Latin, French and Italian in her youth. Tutored by a Cambridge librarian, she had extensive access to books. Throughout her life, her own library and the personal libraries of friends provided books from which to study and critique. When she stayed with John Evelyn in 1755, she wrote to her friend, Ann Calvert Anstey:

Sir John Evelyn's is a venerable respectable place; the house and furniture remain as left by the famous planter, John Evelyn, and it put me in mind of the old song of an old courtier of the queen's; it has a good old library full of good old books; rooms of decent state, no modern foppery or modern luxury.<sup>105</sup>

Here Montagu revealed a reverence for the past and exhibited knowledge of the classics. Deriding 'modern foppery or modern luxury', she showed a clear bias for a world gone by which could be taught by 'good old books' in a 'good old library'. There is an obvious element of conservatism and a veneration of scholarly learning.

Personal book collections owned by Montagu's circle allowed Montagu and others to maintain their reading habits, as well as publish on progressive topics such as women's education. It is clear that the mention of 'old' books and libraries implied classical

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<sup>104</sup> See Philosophical Reader chapter.



learning. In a letter to Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld in 1774, Montagu made this distinction clear: 'Your style is so classical, that I imagine that your Father's Study chiefly abounds with old books, if anything new excites your curiosity let me have the pleasure of conveying it to you'.<sup>106</sup> These books seem to have been judged as weighty texts of erudition, removed from the more 'mundane' everyday reading of household manuals and men's legal texts. However, the classics did serve a practical purpose for the bluestockings and other writers and thinkers in the public sphere. Necessary content and context was gained from such books, supporting the bluestockings' writing of history, criticism, literature and poetry. Books read, borrowed from friends or read within households, provided material for educated women's written work, which propelled careers forward. The philosophical and literary debates stimulated by reading practices were necessary for authorial success. They were not ephemeral, discussion points for the sake of discussion, but necessary foundations of good writing.

### **Women's education**

Alongside goals for authorship and public expression, a collective goal of the bluestockings was improved education for women. Throughout Montagu's correspondence, the issue of correct education frequently arose in her exhortations to others that their children be brought up properly, as well as in remarks about her own education, which she saw as enviable. In a letter to William Freind, in congratulation upon the birth of his daughter in 1742, Montagu advised him how the young girl should be educated:

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<sup>105</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Ann Calvert Anstey, 26 Aug. 1755, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4951-D072. Accessed from BIWLD on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>106</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld, 22 Feb. 1774, in A. L. A. LeBreton, compiler, *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld, including letters and notices of her family and friends* (London, 1874), S4323-D005. Accessed from BIWLD on 18 Aug. 2011.

Dissimulation is looked upon by many fathers and mothers as an accomplishment, and ignorance as a merit; and a woman is turned into the world to act by deceit or folly as either happens to prevail in her mind. I am sure you will give the little demoiselle an excellent education, and teach her it is much easier to be what one should be, than to seem what one is not, which is an oeconomy of behaviour those observe who have the thirst of praise without the taste of virtue.<sup>107</sup>

In this advice, Montagu expressed the dangers of allowing a girl to grow up deceptive and ignorant. She emphasised the importance of behaviour, learning and a 'taste of virtue'. These ingredients would comprise an appropriate education for girls.

Montagu then went on to warn against a young woman putting too much store in physical beauty, using the metaphor of a book to make her point.

The love of praise is certainly a great incentive to virtue, but it is the misfortune of many women to place their vanity upon their beauty; and then it will not make one effort towards worthiness; therefore, it is of great consequence a girl should not look upon beauty as a meritorious thing, but only esteem it as a lucky accident to have her virtues written in fair characters. A book may be very tiresome, though the print may be fine, and the only advantage is, that the beauty of the letter may induce people to peruse it; but, when we have read it we give our judgment freely.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu, 1742?, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4950-D034. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>108</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu, 1742?, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4950-D034. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011.

In this familiar advice to ‘not judge a book by its cover’, Montagu saw outer beauty as a deceptive front for a lack of substance beneath. A pretty book could attract readers to its perusal, but ultimately it would reveal its lack of content, and the book judged to be ‘tiresome’. Montagu concluded with some first-hand experience of beauty’s allure as well as its potential disappointment. ‘I have often in company given my attention to a handsome woman whom I did not know, out of a strong prepossession that she must talk sense; and have been very angry that such a fine sign should afford bad entertainment’.<sup>109</sup> Physical attractiveness in women, while compelling to Montagu as a possible sign that one would ‘talk sense’, was not actually a guarantee of a learned mind or an indicator of a good education. Beauty mattered little without the backing of sense and virtue. The book metaphor above was appropriate in this example, highlighting the value of fully digesting one’s reading in order to achieve a virtuous education.<sup>110</sup>

Valuing learning for women as she did, Montagu, with her vast wealth and network of friends, was a significant source of patronage for her fellow women writers. Elizabeth Carter, in particular, received annuities from Montagu. The two women discussed books widely, and Montagu often sent books to Carter at her house in Deal. The relationship enabled mutual support through correspondence.<sup>111</sup> In 1760, Montagu wrote to Carter:

I am sorry for your tremors and trepidations, but they are mere nervous disorders, and the manuscript must be printed; so, my dear Urania, away with your lamentations,

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<sup>109</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu, 1742?, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4950-D034. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>110</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter on ‘how to read’, pp. 95.

<sup>111</sup> The two friends were introduced in 1758 and became good friends thereafter. Carter encouraged Montagu in her publication of her defence of Shakespeare (1769). Montagu established annuities for Carter after Montagu’s husband’s death. Schnorrenberg, ‘Montagu’, *ODNB*.

sit down, revise, correct, augment, print, and publish. I am sure you will have a pleasure in communicating the pious, virtuous sentiments that breathe in all your verses. My inferior soul will feel a joy in your producing such proofs of genius to the world; let it see that all your advantages are not derived from study. The envious may say you brought your wisdom from Athens, your wit is your own.<sup>112</sup>

By the 1760s, Carter was already known for her translation of Epictetus (which had brought her into contact with Montagu), and no doubt this letter is in reference to Carter's volume of poetry entitled *Poems on Several Occasions* published in 1762. In this decade, Carter also helped Montagu with her own publication on Shakespeare. The two friends read, edited and provided suggestions for each other's work and the relationship was undeniably beneficial, both practically and emotionally, for their careers as women authors.

### **Public Recognition**

Both Carter and Montagu were celebrated for their writing and their images were glorified in the painting of the *Nine Living Muses of Great Britain* by Richard Samuel in 1778. In this painting, Samuel celebrated the bluestocking circle as national cultural icons, portraying them as the daughters of Zeus who each presided over a different art. Sitters for the portrait, beside Carter and Montagu, included Anna Leaticia Barbauld, poet and writer, Elizabeth Griffith, playwright and novelist, Angelica Kauffmann, painter, Charlotte Lennox, writer, Catharine Macaulay, historian and political polemicist, Hannah More, religious writer, and Elizabeth Ann Sheridan, singer and writer. This portrait highlights

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<sup>112</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, Dec. 1760?, in *The Letters of*

the public celebration of the bluestockings as a group, with a collective identity, suggesting the sociability inherent in a shared culture of books and reading.

The sharing and discussion of reading was critical to the bluestockings' success as authors. Whether it was during conversations face to face, or in letters while separated, literary conversations were emblematic of the bluestocking social world. For example, after Samuel's painting, Montagu sent some of William Cowper's poems to Hannah More, knowing that she would enjoy them particularly.

I have enclosed some verses of Mr Cowpers which will be more favorably received by you than any one, as you are the only Person who will not observe they are not the best that have been written on ye subject. However they are very pretty, & the theme is worthy of ye assistance of ye nymphs of Polyena as well as the Nine Muses.<sup>113</sup>

This demonstrates that Montagu was aware of More's tastes in poetry and that the exchange of poems and verses was a common occurrence in epistolary networks of the bluestockings. We also see a classical allusion and a reference to Samuel's, the Nine Muses. There is mutual recognition of More's and Montagu's position as literary figures and critical thinkers and writers. The sharing and discussion of reading material reinforced the literary statuses of the women.

Book networks and friendships enabled greater access to books for bluestocking women. In a letter dated 1750 to her sister, Sarah Robinson, Montagu wrote from London of a friend who supplied her with books from Paris. This friend got books to

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*Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4952-D068. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>113</sup> BL, Photocopies of manuscript letters, RP 238, Letters from Montagu to Hannah More. 15 Oct. Year unknown. p. 18.

Montagu as soon as she could obtain them from Paris.<sup>114</sup> Such a friendship allowed Montagu greater accessibility to books; her networks strengthened her reading. These networks also provided a source of informal book reviews and recommendations, as seen above in the case of Catherine Talbot. The following is a long excerpt from a Montagu letter to Mary Anstey from 1751. Here it is clear that Anstey had asked Montagu for book recommendations:

As to your enquiry concerning books I can readily answer there are some worth your reading, which perhaps have not yet fallen in your way. Mr Hook has published a 2<sup>d</sup> Edition of his Roman History which is much admired. Mr Browns Essays on ye characteristics of Ld Shaftesbury are well spoken of. I am going to read them. Ld Percey has just published his observations on the Life & writings of Swift which may perhaps amuse a vacant hour. If you are not disposed to the Roman History, & yet Historically given, the Biographica Brethanica will entertain you with the Lives of many great men: some of them are very well written. Mr Warburtons Edition of Mr Popes works contain some new pieces & some alterations of the old ones. Les Memoirs du Duc de Sully are very entertaining. I have just been reading the memoirs concerning the Queen of Sweden but cannot greatly recommend them.<sup>115</sup>

This long section has been extracted to reveal the broad scope of Montagu's reading recommendations. It is also evidence of epistolary reviews that provided bluestocking women with up to date reviews on recently-released books. The range of recommendations is wide, including Roman History (Hook), Biography (Shaftesbury, Sully and Biographica Brethanica), Literature (Pope) and Political History (Queen of Sweden). Montagu

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<sup>114</sup> HL, 29 Nov. 1750, Letter from Montagu to Sarah Robinson, MO 5721.

recognised that, even though Roman history might not appeal to her friend, history could still be an interesting topic, studied in other formats such as biography. This section also provides evidence again of the informal reviews contained in bluestocking letters that guided individual reading choices. Montagu did not recommend the memoirs of the Queen of Sweden due to the writer's inelegant style, confused method and unimportant facts. Montagu would have preferred to hear more about the Queen's political life than her intellectual life. Again, social networks were necessary for book access and review.

More famous than Thomas Hollis and his world of book collecting and distribution, Montagu thrived in an expanding, public world of print, conversation, and sociability, as a member of a female network dedicated to bringing about social change. Similar to Hollis, Montagu and her fellow bluestockings did work toward an improvement of society, specifically better education for women.<sup>116</sup> While Hollis promoted his philosophical and political programme of liberty and *Virtù* through distributing books to individuals and institutions, Montagu and others promoted the cause of women's education in their writing and in their conversations. Montagu, best placed financially to bring about change, even established a girls' school in the North, for the children of workers in her mines. Besides women's education in particular, the bluestockings considered it a duty to undertake good works in general, and the network was a source of charity for some poorer members of society. Anglican morality, particularly emphasised by evangelist Hannah More, inspired Montagu's circle to philanthropy. Church of England loyalties ran deep for many women and, as Susan Staves has shown, friendships between

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<sup>115</sup> HL, 23 Nov. 1751, London. Letter from Montagu to Mary Anstey, MO 114.

<sup>116</sup> They also joined in with political and literary debates such as republicanism and Shakespearean criticism, for example.

clergy and women writers influenced the latter's publications and work in the world.<sup>117</sup>

### **Piety and the Bluestockings**

Anglicanism, while an inducement to perform charity, was also a philosophical basis for women to educate themselves. Staves has explored the role of clergymen in encouraging the religious publications of women writers:

With the encouragement of some clergymen, churchwomen also addressed themselves particularly to women on the subjects of women's spiritual and intellectual development. Works ranging from Astell's *Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694, 1697) and *The Christian Religion as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England* (1705) through Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773) to Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) all insisted that true religion was the basis for sound knowledge and that women had a religious duty to develop their intellects.<sup>118</sup>

Christian practice, informed by religious reading, influenced the bluestocking programme of philanthropy for the poor and education for women. This action in the world was the duty of a pious, virtuous woman. Access to books and libraries provided by the clergy was critical. For example, Catherine Macaulay moved into the Rev. Thomas Wilson's home eight years after the death of her first husband. There she could use his extensive library.<sup>119</sup> As Staves shows, these women, encouraged by the church and held

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<sup>117</sup> Staves, 'Clergy'.

<sup>118</sup> Staves, 'Clergy'.

<sup>119</sup> Staves, 'Clergy', p.95.



up as models of Anglican female piety, published in the public sphere to explain the importance of female education and devotion.

Besides publication and writing as a manifestation of piety, bluestockings' reading and study habits fulfilled Anglican notions of devotion. Clarissa Campbell Orr has written that George III's court saw itself as a centre of Protestant enlightenment, and aristocrats such as the Duchess of Portland (1715-85) and others fostered literary leanings and intellectuality within a context of Christian philosophy.<sup>120</sup> The Bible and other spiritual texts, such as sermons, were necessary reading. Elizabeth Montagu's letters demonstrate the centrality of religious text as an object of study. In a letter to the young Thomas Lyttelton of 1758 she advised him on his reading habits. Montagu was a friend of Lyttelton's father who asked her to advise the son in his studies. After a long description of important classical study, she emphasised the importance of reading the Bible. This was a fundamental part of eighteenth-century education. Montagu said that it alone would 'make a good man':

It may seem strange that I have last mentioned what should be first regarded. The Bible alone will make a good man; human learning, without the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of him, which is understanding, will produce but a poor and inconsistent character; but duties are enlarged and multiplied by the power and circumstances with which God has intrusted us, and in which he has placed us.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> C. Campbell Orr, 'Queen Charlotte, "scientific queen"', in C. Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Britain 1660-1837: royal patronage, court culture and dynastic politics* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 249-50.

<sup>121</sup> Montagu, Letter from Montagu to Thomas Lyttelton, 2nd Baron, 1758?, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, S4952-D019. Accessed from *BIWLD* on 18 Aug. 2011.

Though she gave this advice to a young man, there is no doubt that the statement, 'human learning, without the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of him, which is understanding, will produce but a poor and inconsistent character' was meant to apply universally. She went on to speak of 'us', which again implies men and women. The emphasis in this advice is on the centrality of God in all wisdom and understanding. Enlightenment theories about the progressive nature of learning did not include a denial of God's ultimate wisdom and providence in the world, and some British thinkers saw their Protestant philosophies as a counterweight to dangerous atheism and deism in revolutionary France. The life of the mind, supported by pious reading, required holy guidance.

## **Conclusion**

The bluestockings used reading as a means for fulfilling social, intellectual and cultural goals. For middling men, books reinforced careers as well as their social, religious and familial lives. In the case of Thomas Hollis, the reading of particular books enabled his personal aim of spreading a specific political programme. He distributed treatises in agreement with his own philosophical and political programme, aligned to a masculine conception of *Virtù*. The culture of books within which Talbot and Montagu circulated exemplified a corresponding sense of feminine civic virtue, in a sphere dominated by men. For the bluestockings, reading widely and extensively was characteristic of a group of women who relied on print for their success as national cultural and literary figures. Their familiarity with historical, political and philosophical texts enabled them to participate in public, political and social debate.

Gender has been analysed in all chapters of this thesis. Masculinity was emphasised in the group of middling men as reflective of social, religious and economic goals for the self. In the discussion of Thomas Hollis, masculinity represented an intellectual ideal of civic humanism and republicanism of the seventeenth century, in contrast to what some contemporaries saw as the effeminacy of the eighteenth century. The bluestockings can also be analysed within a gender framework. The bluestocking programme operated in accordance with some contemporary expectations of femininity in which women presented themselves as moral and virtuous exemplars, both as pious readers and advocates of women's education. At the same time, extensive reading meant allowed for participation in a culture of letters and learning normally dominated by men. However, prejudice against 'learned ladies' represented the other side of the fine line the bluestockings had to tread to remain respectable in the public arena. A dedicated commitment to reading meant that they were on a more even playing field with their male contemporaries, engaging in print sociability in a manner similar to the literary lives of the middling men, as well as Thomas Hollis, despite the danger of satirical attacks on the female pedant. Importantly, the bluestockings studied here relied heavily on friendship networks for encouragement, mutual support, access to books, recommendations and shared reviews. Social relationships supported a culture of reading which was fundamental to Talbot and Montagu's successes.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Virtuous Reader**

The diaries of Anna Margaretta Larpent (1758-1832), covering the period 1773-1830, provide a detailed portrait of an active and critical reader.<sup>1</sup> Larpent used her books for educational, religious, emotional and familial ends. Passionate about print, she devoured a remarkable amount of literature composed of various genres and formats. While her position as wife to the Examiner of Plays, John Larpent, gave her unprecedented access to drama manuscripts, she also dedicated herself to obtaining and consuming diverse and abundant print matter. Her extensive commentary on her reading recorded over a 57-year period makes her an exceptionally useful case study in the examination of late eighteenth-century print culture and consumption.

This chapter will analyse genre and form, as well as reception, in order to identify reading tactics and active strategies of the educated, late eighteenth-century woman reader. The examination of genre will expose different modes for the reading of various categories. Larpent's religious reading was often part of a pious routine. She used spiritual books for devotional purposes, as well as intellectual betterment and literary study. Larpent read novels with an eye to literary criticism, as well as judgement of authorship. Religious works and novels provided enjoyment and improved mood in difficult times. Non-fiction was read for intellectual improvement, as well as information on current events and news. Larpent read journals and newspapers for a combination of all the above reasons, including practical information on which books to buy. She employed specific reading tactics according to her goals for each genre.

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<sup>1</sup> In the excerpts extracted from Larpent's diary, all underlining is her own.

### **Anna Larpent and the Historians**

John Brewer has researched Larpent for his reconstruction of the reader.<sup>2</sup> His assessment of Larpent's reading as a 'bold, heroic enterprise' is appropriate praise for a woman who devoted so much of her energy to literary pursuit and intellectual engagement.<sup>3</sup> She was indeed a courageous and energetic consumer of print: she felt a 'right to her own judgment'.<sup>4</sup> There has been a project to recast the female reader as an active cultural consumer in opposition to long-standing scholarship on the passivity of women novel-readers who were considered 'idle drones', as famously asserted by Lawrence Stone.<sup>5</sup> Anna Larpent's diaries are evidence of a disciplined intellectual and religious routine. She was undeniably an active, engaged reader.

Work by Mark Towsey on the reading experience of Elizabeth Rose, the lady laird of Kilravock near Nairn, also relates to this chapter.<sup>6</sup> Rose's reading included the practice of extracting and transcribing portions of books in an attempt to digest and apply literary content, as well as process emotional and spiritual thoughts and feelings. The French pedagogue Charles Rollin, as Towsey points out, was the first to recommend extracting as an integral part of a girl's education.<sup>7</sup> Rose bears much similarity to Larpent in her project of reading to 'effect her own moral improvement' and as a mark of dedication to her family.<sup>8</sup> However, Larpent the reader was much more active, analytical and critical of the authors she read and often sought more intellectual aims. She included elaborate commentary, criticism and opinions on her reading.

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<sup>2</sup> J. Brewer, 'Reconstructing the reader: prescriptions, texts and strategies in Anna Larpent's reading', in Raven, Small and Tadmor, *Reading*, pp. 226-245; Brewer, *English Culture*.

<sup>3</sup> Brewer, 'Reader', p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Brewer, 'Reader', p. 245.

<sup>5</sup> Stone, *The family*, pp. 396-7.

<sup>6</sup> Towsey, 'Rose', pp. 15-33.

<sup>7</sup> Towsey, 'Rose', p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Towsey, 'Rose', p. 18.

This study will include a review of genre in order to determine how Larpent read various categories differently. John Brewer has noted several approaches toward reading separate genres, considering them reflections of Anna Larpent's conception of the ideal 'reader'. He writes:

Anna's critical assertiveness when discussing imaginative literature sits well with her determination to dissociate herself from the 'transported reader' or to recast the notion of readerly transcendence, but the confidence in her own voice, which balances distance and engagement in the fictional realm, declines sharply when she discusses matters of history and politics.<sup>9</sup>

According to Brewer, Larpent perceived herself more as a 'passive recipient' in the reading of history and politics, rather than as the 'active critic' that she was when reading novels and poetry. Indeed, others have noted Larpent's discerning criticism of similar 'creative' genres, such as drama.<sup>10</sup> Larpent's different approach to literature compared to history and politics was gendered for Brewer: she alluded to a 'masculine monopoly of classical learning', separate, perhaps, from more feminine categories of novels and poetry.<sup>11</sup>

Larpent's varied reception of different genres is explored in this chapter. However, the variation in reception is explained by Larpent's own understanding of purpose for each text. Reaction to novels and poetry differed from reaction to history and politics, not due to gender variance, but due to the specific response required for each type of literary category. Larpent did show herself to be critical of political writing, for example, stating when

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<sup>9</sup> Brewer, 'Reader', p. 236.

<sup>10</sup> L.W. Conolly, 'The censor's wife at the theatre : the diary of Anna Margareta Larpent, 1790-1800', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 35 (1971), pp. 49-64 p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Brewer, 'Reader', p. 238.

she disagreed with authors' views or when she found their arguments unconvincing. Larpent did not read in a feminine mode that was less confident of judging 'masculine' texts.

Historians have noted Larpent's aversion to reading as an indulgence of the passions.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, her reading was often methodical. Nevertheless, reading was also an emotional exercise for Larpent, part of a rigorous intellectual routine as well as psychological therapy. This reading as a method to 'soothe' her mind was another strategy employed for a particular purpose. Existing historical work neglects the emotional aspects of Larpent's approach to her consumption of print. She was expressive when she wrote about her reading, exclaiming when things excited her or irritated her.

In all, the following work seeks to expand existing scholarship to get at the elaborate inner world of Larpent, the reader, as well as the objective reality of print. This chapter emphasises strategic reading as an element of the well-read eighteenth-century female reader to recast her as an active player in the print consumption process, who used her books for diverse intellectual, emotional and spiritual ends. The focus of this chapter will be on the print genres, the purpose of the texts for Larpent, the different ways she interpreted what she read, the forms of reading material and her access to books. The chapter also includes discussions on reading as an emotional salve and Larpent's education of her children.

Larpent's diaries reveal an astounding level of reading. Her first journal, the methodized journal (1773-1780) refers to the first journal in which she began organising her written thoughts from her daybooks into a more structured journal format.<sup>13</sup> All her journals reveal a massive amount of reading. Most of the texts consumed were books and periodicals. In some years Larpent read

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<sup>12</sup> Brewer, 'Reader', p. 236.

<sup>13</sup> M. Morris, 'Negotiating domesticity in the journals of Anna Larpent', *Journal of Women's History*, 22 (Spring, 2010), pp. 58-106, p. 88.

over 100 publications, including classics, poetry, plays, histories, news media, and novels. Each day of her records included mention of extensive reading of one or a combination of these types. Upon finishing a work, Larpent usually wrote her critical opinion of the piece, and possibly, her feelings surrounding it. She also included lists of books read over a month or year, as well as books she was interested in buying, often based on reviews she had read. The diaries comprise one of the most extensive sources for analysing late eighteenth-century reading strategies.

Larpent's understanding of genre, that is, the categories she used to divide types of books, is worth dissecting in order to achieve an understanding of her tactics for digesting texts. The way she organised printed works is made clear by the lists of past reading at the ends of months or years. Her main categories were: Bible, Religious Studies, History & Biography & Politics, Travels, Drama & Poetry, Novels & Romances, and Miscellaneous, which consisted of reviews, periodicals and newspapers. There is no indication that her categories were unusual for the time or unreflective of widely understood genres of literature. There is also no sense that these were categories or works written specifically for women readers. It is true that women-targeted publishing was well established at this time, particularly conduct literature and other domestic guidebooks.<sup>14</sup> However, Anna Larpent, unlike Elizabeth Rose, did not give evidence of reading conduct literature. That means either she did not read it, or chose not to record it in her diary (or it was included in one of the other categories). She may have judged genre within a hierarchy, with some categories considered below her notice or irrelevant to her life experience, or at least the diary-writing project. She was certainly critical about

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<sup>14</sup> Books aimed at women readers had been published since at least the late seventeenth century. The number of books for women increased throughout the eighteenth century. Periodicals, such as *The Female Spectator* in the 1740s and the *Lady's Magazine* starting in the 1770s were also evidence of female-oriented publishing. Bull, 'Femininity'.



content within a particular genre, so there is no doubt that she could have been critical and dismissive of entire genres altogether.

### **Pious Reading**

Larpent wrote about her bible reading and religious studies the most within her diaries. Religious studies consisted of sermons, as well as spiritual meditations, lessons, prayers and reflections. The most extensive religious reading took place on Sunday. After the turn of the century, Larpent incorporated a greater amount of religious reading into daily devotionals. She understood her biblical reading and sermon study in terms of an intellectual regimen for betterment and sought to improve her mind in conjunction with her soul. It is hard to separate Larpent's piety from intellect. In the following diary excerpt, Larpent discussed and analysed a sermon with the language of reason and argument:

Rose at past 8. pray'd. red two sermons of Macdonalds and finished the Book. "They are rather Essays than Sermons—Many points of Morality & social Duty are set in a strong & new light. Many inferences are ably drawn & well expressed. The stile [sic] is often very Eloquent. & never below the subject. He reasons on Human Nature, on Manners, on the Nature of the Soul, on its passions, his Religion is sound.—There is great firmness of principle in the arguments he uses to support it. Yet I think the sermons too short, too much of Essays for the Religious Reader.<sup>15</sup>

She judged the 'short', essay-like sermons on how well the author supported and justified the argument by the principle. This was a philosophical interpretation of questions of spirituality: human

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<sup>15</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 24 Mar. 1792.

nature, the nature of the soul, and the passions. Larpent intellectualised her spiritual practices. Her use of quotation marks exemplifies her habit of informal literary review, even in the case of pious study. The quotation marks signify that this section was her literary analysis and opinion of a piece of writing. Mind and soul worked conjointly. For such a reader, religious practice and worship meant religious study and reason.

The times and spaces of Larpent's pious reading were important. Larpent's religious reading life was split between individual and social textual consumption. Her religious devotionals were some of the first and last activities of the day, usually done alone and in her personal space. In contrast, religious practice during the day took place with the participation of her family. This tended to be in the form of reading sermons aloud with her family on Sunday at home. Religious reading was an aspect of personal spiritual practice, which required one's sole attention and the quietness offered by a quiet, individual space, such as a closet, but it was also a communal exercise shared within the family unit or the wider community.<sup>16</sup> This combination of individual and social religious reading persists throughout all the case studies of readers, as each person found occasion for silent, introspective study, while also participating in communal religious reading, sometimes in the home and sometimes in a church.

The importance of Christian devotion facilitated through the printed word cannot be emphasised enough in the case of Anna Larpent. Throughout her life, she wrote in her diary about relying on faith to buttress her spirits during emotional difficulty. Larpent relied on the sermons, bible stories, lessons and devotionals she read. The way in which she processed such works in the form of

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<sup>16</sup> E. Botonaki has discussed the relationship between the closet and the diary, a 'textual closet' for early modern women, in 'Early modern women's diaries and closets: "chambers of choice, mercies and beloved retirement"' in, Doll and Munns, *Recording and reordering*, pp. 43-64. See also the Ideal Reader chapter section on the closet, pp. 82-84.

opinions and thoughts expressed through her diary acted as religious practice in itself. The diary was a sort of pious journal in this sense. It acted as a spiritual internal conversation.<sup>17</sup> After 1804, when her sons had grown-up and left home, Larpent became increasingly religious and devoted to religious print consumption. Spending her thirties and early forties educating her children, Larpent used her later years to reflect more frequently on her life and Christianity. On the 1 January 1804 she wrote:

Personally I think I am a better Christian from the constant practice & study of religion—my mind is more content—my heart more raised to God—My endeavours to do right more cheerful—I look forward with Hope.—& ever with resignation praising God as my all wise friend & Guardian under every dispensation. I have red [sic] much yet I might study more usefully.<sup>18</sup>

Larpent often used the days of January to reflect on the previous year, as well as her religious steadfastness and personal improvement. She said that she became more ‘cheerful’ through ‘resignation’—once again demonstrating the importance of providential philosophy.<sup>19</sup> She explained that it was through the constant practice of religion that her mind became more ‘content’. Religious reading thus served as a force of self-improvement, as well as a strategy for improved ‘cheer’ and contentment over time. In this manner, Larpent’s pious reading acted in a similar fashion to that of the occupational men. Religious texts could be improving, as well as healing through self-reflection and emulation. Larpent was keen to study both religious and secular texts. Assiduousness was characteristic of almost all the readers

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<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of the 1796 volume, Larpent wrote that it was a record of a ‘chat with myself’. BL, Larpent, M1016/1.

<sup>18</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/2, 1 Jan. 1804.

<sup>19</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter, Occupational Reader chapter and Bluestocking Reader chapter.

studied, particularly as it related to self-improvement, but also social relations, whether in religion, family groups and teaching, or friendships. A shared culture of reading bound readers together.

While religious reading was part of her faith practice, Larpent could still be a pointed critic of sermons and religious lessons. She did not take teachings at face value because they were religious. Again, we find her intellectualising religion:

I red [sic] Bp. Watsons Charge of 1791 to his Clergy.—“Very odd. Much good sense without Dignity. Why will they Unite Politics & Religion. Jesus Christ did it not? If Watson be honest, He is very Honest if he be Artful—he is very very Artful. God Judges the Hearts of Men!—After tea I red [sic] a Chapter of Smellies Philosophy of Nature. I worked at the Chair I went to bed early. I blessed God for all his mercies I felt Happy—because I had gained ideas, quickly.<sup>20</sup>

Larpent was a critical, discerning reader. She did not just accept preaching and sermons unquestioningly and could be sceptical of authors. It was characteristic of Larpent to be highly critical of the writers she read, often questioning their motives to determine if they were trustworthy authorities. Her judgement of Watson here is a prime example. He was not above her censure despite his position as a bishop. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff’s, ‘Charge of 1791 to his clergy’ asserted that Watson was pleased to see the French people freed from the ‘tyranny of royal despotism’, but he feared the despotism of demagoguery even more, so would reserve his opinion on the French Revolution until its resolution.<sup>21</sup> Larpent read closely political debates surrounding the French

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<sup>20</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 14 Mar. 1792.

<sup>21</sup> R. Hole, ‘English sermons and tracts as media of debate on the French Revolution, 1789-99’, in M. Philp, ed., *The French Revolution and British popular politics* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 18-37, p. 24.

Revolution. The diary extract reveals her critical review of religious and political writing, as well as how quickly debates could be accessed and assessed. Larpent wrote her critique in March 1792, and the *Charge* was from 1791. Finally, this example highlights Larpent's enjoyment in 'gaining ideas quickly'. Larpent experienced pleasure through her intellectual engagement with texts. Thus, religious reading could be combined with critical review, an engagement with current debates and intellectual enjoyment.

### **The Material Book**

The materiality of print and its accessibility were critical issues for eighteenth-century readers. Though this thesis focuses on reading practices, the history of reading cannot neglect a consideration of the material aspects of the book.<sup>22</sup> Larpent borrowed books from libraries as well as bought books, and borrowed books from friends. Larpent's diary suggests that she was able to acquire and read books soon after publication. She read the latest reviews on recent publications and read the works soon after their release. This is evident throughout the diaries, but one standout example is that of *Northanger Abbey*. Larpent had read this novel, published in December 1817, by early January 1818.<sup>23</sup> A similar instance occurred at the beginning of 1827 when she read a book (*Heads Rough Sketches*) before reading the review in the *Quarterly Review* No. 69 a day later.<sup>24</sup> Larpent as a print consumer was able to acquire the latest published material quickly and have access to relevant debates in print, especially when she was residing in London.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Introduction chapter.

<sup>23</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/4, 7 Jan. 1818.

<sup>24</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 19 Jan. 1827.

<sup>25</sup> In 1790, the Larpents moved to Newnan Street, London, and Ashstead in Surrey. In 1798 they gave up their Ashstead home, and in 1799, moved to Charlotte Street, London. In 1804, they moved to Putney. Cody, 'Larpent', *ODNB*.

Larpent wrote about the elements she admired in books as objects, specifically the typeset and the engravings. For example, in 1793 she remarked on an attractive publication, saying she had ‘finished Hodge’s Travels through India. A very elegant publication, beautifully printed, embellished with very fine Engravings’.<sup>26</sup> Larpent praised beautiful attributes in another book in the same year, saying, ‘I have also omitted saying how much I was pleased with Lysons Survey of Surry [sic]. A book full of Anecdote full of acute observations...The type the engraving are beautiful—the whole entertains me much’.<sup>27</sup> This description demonstrates that appearance of books was important for Larpent. Aesthetics mattered for most reader consumers.

The diaries also contain commentary on the ‘arrangement’ of publications. For example, in 1808 Larpent wrote:

I read Brewsters Meditations under anxiety without proper attention, my mind confused...but when I read the recapitulation which in admirable plan of the work & I think without it, produces effect it had on me. Should be the preface. I was so struck & pleased with the arrangement, so hurt at my own carelessness that I resolved to begin the work again.<sup>28</sup>

Here she complained that author only explained the plan of the work at the end. If the author had explained the literary intention at the beginning, the reading of the text would have been more enjoyable. Thus, Larpent resolved to read the work a second time.<sup>29</sup> She valued pleasing typeset, appealing engravings and helpful layouts. Other readers in this thesis admired specific

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<sup>26</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 20 Apr. 1793.

<sup>27</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 30 April 1793.

<sup>28</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/3, 13 July 1808.

<sup>29</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 30, Philosophical Reader chapter, p. 175, and Bluestocking Reader chapter, pp. 206-208, regarding reading volumes more than once.

aspects of material texts. Such attributes affected purchasing decisions.<sup>30</sup> Readers' interests in books as objects highlights the position of print as a product for commercial consumption by Larpent's day.

Developments in print technology that made books cheaper and more portable meant that books were no longer such exclusive items by the late eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Materially, books were available readily to readers like Larpent. As Brewer states, 'the overriding impression from Larpent's diary is of the ubiquity of books'.<sup>32</sup> It is undeniable that the copious lists and reflections on such a large amount of published material shows the accessibility of print to relatively wealthy women in and near London.<sup>33</sup> By this point, readers could also take books outside the home, library or bookshop. This thesis provides evidence of readers carrying books with them on carriage journeys as well as on walks through the countryside.<sup>34</sup> In a print market of diversification and expansion, material elements such as type, engravings, size and format, could entice buyers who were reading books in a greater range of places and for more varied purposes. Anna Larpent took special notice of aspects that made her reading experience more fulfilling, suggesting that such embellishments, as well as coherent formats, would have contributed to her purchase decisions.<sup>35</sup>

### **Larpent and Novels**

Larpent's reading of novels is important to analyse as historians have considered it a distinctive new genre of the period.

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<sup>30</sup> See Occupational Reader chapter on Matthew Flinders' reading purchases, p. 138.

<sup>31</sup> See Introduction chapter on publishing developments, pp. 41-43.

<sup>32</sup> Brewer, *English culture*, p. 196.

<sup>33</sup> Other case studies in this thesis demonstrate that provincial readers also had access to books through circulating libraries, shops and improved transport links.

<sup>34</sup> See Occupational Reader chapter and Romantic Reader chapter.

<sup>35</sup> See Philosophical Reader chapter on Hollis' emblems intended to guide a reader in a specific way, p. 150.

Commentators at the time were quick to associate women with novel-reading, often in chastisement. Novels were certainly an important category of literature for Larpent, though not as an idle form of reading practice. Larpent's consumption of novels counters historians who have characterised women novel-readers as idle and listless, as already discussed.<sup>36</sup> Though Larpent was sometimes critical of novel-readership herself, the amount of novels read comprised a significant portion of her total reading (though by no means the majority). Her diary is filled with opinions on the works she read, however, she was wary of novels for being 'too seducing, too trivial, too dangerous'.<sup>37</sup> Larpent did see the benefit of novels being able to portray accurate characters similar to real life. This acceptance of the positive side of novel-reading explains why she spent time critiquing novels in a serious manner. Her judgements on novels consisted of literary criticism, specifically, pronouncements on style, symbolism, expression, taste, narrative and realism.

Larpent presented herself within her diaries as a skilled literary critic with astute and well-formulated opinions. She was quick to judge style as well as the merit of characters created in a piece of fiction. Realistic characters were preferable, those that were true to 'nature'. Of Austen's novel *Persuasion*, Larpent wrote beautifully:

They are people one can see daily—feelings one has felt or heard of daily—incidents simple & only complicated by the common effects of common causes & yet the mind is carried on by the Nature & truth which animate the story & we feel as we should in hearing that of a friend.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Stone, *The family*, pp. 396-7. See also Ideal Reader chapter for an exploration of novel-reading anxieties, pp. 85-90.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted by Brewer, *English culture*, p. 197.

<sup>38</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/4, 10 Jan. 1818.



Larpent explained that Austen's characters were similar to people present in a reader's own life. The plot points in the narrative pivoted on 'common effects of common causes', realistic incidents to which a reader could relate. One's mind was 'carried on by the Nature & truth' of the story, as if it was being recounted by a friend. Larpent praised *Persuasion* highly for its realistic characters and events, commendations still bestowed on Austen by her readers today. Larpent believed novels should be 'true' to life, and she read the genre strategically according to this goal.

Larpent considered further elements in her literary reviews of novels, including morality, structure, guidance and taste. Scrupulously, she criticised the morality of other novels and their authors. For example, in 1774 she considered French novelists to be debased. She later described their descriptions as 'abominably loose & disgusting to the modest'.<sup>39</sup> Structure earned her praise or criticism, depending on the coherence of the narrative in question. She also remarked on whether she was interested or amused by a story, as well as whether the story contained life lessons. Larpent denounced stories that were 'forced', and she applauded 'taste', which will be explored below. Larpent read novels in accordance with her own expectations of textual consumption for the novel as a genre.

### **Femininity, Morality and Authorship**

Larpent commented on immature and naïve plotlines. She preferred authors to show knowledge of the world. For example, Larpent was particularly critical of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. In 1818 she described it as, 'a weak story, the sketches of character not particularly interesting...there are traits of nature but chiefly drawn from youthful error, & romantic nonsense, the

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<sup>39</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/2, 16 Jan. 1802. Again, a strong anti-French feeling presents itself in this quote. This is unsurprising as Larpent was writing during the time of the Napoleonic Wars between Britain and France.

annals of girlish fancies & flirting manoever [sic]. Common enough but silly enough. The author loses her own originality'.<sup>40</sup> She said it was the worst of Austen's novels and did not like its 'romantic nonsense', a common critique of some novels in the period. In Larpent's mind, it lacked maturity and necessary knowledge of the world.<sup>41</sup> Still, she did not criticise Austen in general, and in other diary entries, Larpent commended the author's works, as demonstrated by her praise of *Persuasion*. This is notable in the case of Jane Austen, as Larpent usually did not approve of women writing professionally. Perhaps Larpent's respect for Austen's talents as a writer outweighed Larpent's qualms about the morality of female authorship.

In general, professional writing by women was disagreeable to Larpent. She lamented the fact that a widow acquaintance, who was a novelist, wrote 'for bread'.<sup>42</sup> This made the widow 'without correctness', according to Larpent. She could not sympathise with the widow's need to support her family, despite the fact that the woman came to Larpent for advice on her writing. A famous poet and novelist, Charlotte Smith, read frequently by Larpent, wrote 'for bread' and again, according to Larpent, 'one grieves that she must do so'.<sup>43</sup> However, Larpent read Smith often and enjoyed her as an author, like Austen. This underlines the questionable place professional authorship held in Anna Larpent's conception of eighteenth-century polite society, especially for those who were women. It was not women writing that she objected to, and she was willing to praise women's efforts when she judged their work commendable. Rather, she disagreed with women writing for a livelihood.

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<sup>40</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/4, 7 Jan. 1818.

<sup>41</sup> However, one cannot but wonder if Larpent missed the point that *Northanger Abbey* was written as a parody of gothic fiction and thus the 'romantic nonsense' may have been used by Austen on purpose.

<sup>42</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 15 Feb. 1790.

<sup>43</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 26 Apr. 1793.

The position of authorship was problematic for writers in the eighteenth century, especially for those considered lowly ‘hack writers’ writing for commercial gain. Nevertheless, one way to escape the ignominy of ‘grub street’, as argued by Clare Barlow, was to embrace a mantle of ‘moral authorship’, in which one claimed to be working for the betterment of society and for the good of the nation.<sup>44</sup> However, Larpent did not state that she accepted female authorship even on these grounds, though she did read Elizabeth Carter’s *Epictetus*, celebrated in the period as a symbol of British cultural achievement conceived under the claim of moral authorship.<sup>45</sup>

Larpent’s qualms about women writing for money seem to lie with her definition of femininity, which excluded commercial occupation. Like the female pen, she also found some women actors improper. She philosophised about ‘female delicacy’ upon seeing the tragedy, the *British Orphan* in 1790. ‘(The) acting revolts in women against female Delicacy. In Men against Manly Decorum—as I understand Decorum to be, the Wisdom of Manners’.<sup>46</sup> Larpent’s ideal for femininity was that of ‘delicacy’ and her definition of ‘decorum’ included that of the ‘wisdom of manners’. For Larpent, professional women writers were engaged in an activity that was ‘indelicate’, an occupation that could potentially involve negotiations about money, as well as an artistic craft that could be undignified. She spoke of decorum. In the eighteenth century, decorum, based on ancient-world civic humanism, was a concept that meant each person had a role to play and one was not to act outside the boundaries of that prescribed role. One’s manners, or behaviour, were to reinforce the social order. An actor, either male or female, was in danger of behaving in a manner inconsistent with politeness and acceptability, while also working in a paid occupation. While

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<sup>44</sup> Barlow, ‘Female writers’.

<sup>45</sup> Barlow, ‘Female writers’.

<sup>46</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 7 Apr. 1790.

Larpent must have accepted that appropriate acting was possible (she read so many drama manuscripts and attended so many plays, it would be difficult to imagine otherwise), she feared the potential within the acting craft for indelicacy and indecorousness.<sup>47</sup>

Undeniably, there was a tension in Larpent's accounts between her enjoyment and recognition of a writer's talents and the fact of female authorship. Larpent regretted that Charlotte Smith's style in the novel *Desmond* was 'hurried'. Larpent said the conversations in the book were 'somewhat forced'.<sup>48</sup> Yet at the same time, she acknowledged that the book was interesting and had 'pleasing' descriptions. Ultimately, she said that Smith's 'genius predominates and you pity those pecuniary wants that hurry and cramp it'.<sup>49</sup> Here again, the inherent conflict between satisfaction received from reading women authors, and dissatisfaction with the monetary aspect of professional female writing manifests itself. Historians have contested how far women reader's preferred to read books authored by women.<sup>50</sup> The evidence of Larpent's diaries suggests she read many stories by women novelists, though this was not presented as a particular preference over male-written books. She digested, enjoyed and analysed female authors according to her usual methods of literary review. Perhaps her hesitancy about the fact that the authors were women paid to write in a literary market was an indication of a growing amount of novels published by women and read widely, as well as an indication of Larpent's self-consciousness as a female informal literary critic and reviewer.

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<sup>47</sup> Like her literary critiques, Larpent uses the pages of her diary to review plays. While this is not the focus here, using J. Rose's definition of reading, Larpent's response to plays could be seen as an extension of her reading enterprise in which all cultural events were judged and commented on. In this sense, her diary was much like her husband's work as drama critic.

<sup>48</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 14 Aug. 1792.

<sup>49</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 14 Aug. 1792.

<sup>50</sup> Towsey, 'Rose'.

## **History, Biography, Politics and Travels**

Larpent read history, biography, politics and travels to gain knowledge of the political world. Through these genres, she gained increased global awareness. Larpent combined the reading of such, in the 1790s, with the education of her sons as she assisted in their tutoring when they were away from school in Cheam. Her commentary in her diary consisted of summaries of works read and reactions to what she was learning. She was less critical of literary elements than she was with novels because her goals for the reading of history, biography, politics and travels were different than her goals for novels. Larpent was particularly interested in French history and she chose to read it as a way to understand contemporary events. Similarly, when she read contemporary accounts of France, she read them as if they were history:

Rose at 8. Pray'd. finished Christie's Letters on the French Revolution. "These letters are clear, free from passionate exclamations; they state facts, reason on Documents & give a followed account of what passed in France. In short they form a Grammar of the French Revolution. Teaching us how to understand the language of it. By no means so masterly a work as Machintoshes, yet interesting tho' dry for it gives much information. I wish upon this subject to divert myself of the time being to think I am reading History not passing events.<sup>51</sup>

Mentioning similarities between reception of news accounts and historical accounts was characteristic of Anna Larpent as a print consumer. She read both genres to get a broad understanding of the political world, appreciating the objectivity of reportage, which

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<sup>51</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 2 Mar. 1792.

was ‘free from passionate exclamations’. Still, she was not free from prejudices herself and often complained about the Roman Catholics and the French, whom she described as ‘a sanguinary people. Audacious in iniquity, cruelty & leachery’.<sup>52</sup> It is crucial to note that Larpent wrote this comment in October 1793, in the middle of the ‘reign of terror’ in France, during which tens of thousands were executed with the guillotine. Awareness of the situation in France obviously influenced Larpent’s view. Larpent read history and politics seeking an objective view on events in the past and present, yet her reading of such works was affected by prejudices and contemporary reaction to news of the day.

Counter to Brewer’s argument that Larpent lost confidence in her own voice when judging history or politics, we find in her assessment of ‘Christie’s Letters on the French Revolution’ a very self-confident opinion of political writing.<sup>53</sup> She praised the work for being free from passion and stating facts. She said it was not as ‘masterly’ as other authors, yet was interesting and gave plenty of information. In no sense did she shy away from a bold proclamation or analysis due to her gender. The content did not intimidate Larpent and she judged it on its merits as a publication intended to reveal current events. She did not comment on style, as she did with novels, but this was because she purposefully chose to judge them contemporary documents, rather than works of fiction.

Larpent also read travel accounts and biography. Descriptions of English travellers abroad worked as guides to other countries. Her digestion of travel books included studies of maps, which acted as self-taught geography lessons. Larpent’s biography reading included books on the lives of classical thinkers

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<sup>52</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 19 Oct. 1793.

<sup>53</sup> T. Christie, *Letters on the revolution in France and the new constitution* (London, 1791). Thomas Christie (1761-1796) was a radical political writer who defended the French Revolution against Edmund Burke’s criticism. R. C. Christie, ‘Christie, Thomas (1761-1796)’, rev. A. Du Toit, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5365>, accessed 08 May 2012].

such as Aristotle and Virgil, religious figures and elites, as well as contemporary thinkers like Voltaire. When commenting on biographies, Larpent sometimes reviewed author and subject, as shown by this comment on Voltaire:

Rose half past 8. Pray'd. finished the Life of Voltaire. "Condorcets account of Voltaire does not reconcile me to him. His genius, his abilities, I admire. But the use he made of the latter I lament.—then as to Condorcet his opinions are so free, his conclusions so arrogant, he expresses such knock me down opinions, that I felt irritated, & could have burnt the book.<sup>54</sup>

Here Larpent criticised pointedly and assertively, judging the merits of the subject in question as well as the author's writing. In the case of the author here, the Marquis de Condorcet, she had nothing positive to say. She also had negative opinions of Voltaire, which appear in several places in her diary. In this instance, she gave an even more forceful opinion than she did on Christie's Letters. She complained that Condorcet was arrogant and she was so irritated that she wanted to burn the book entirely. Surely if she felt contained as a female critic (albeit one working within the parameters of a diary), she would not have spoken so vehemently against such prominent thinkers.

Regarding historical novels, Larpent made a clear distinction between fiction and fact, falsity and truth. She said that historical novels 'should be very well done to be interesting & never are instructing for they show the truth at last through a false Median'.<sup>55</sup> Larpent did not read historical novels as self-education. She read them as fiction and acted as a critical judge of their literary merits. She judged whether they were 'interesting'.

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<sup>54</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 7 Mar. 1792.

<sup>55</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/4, 31 Mar. 1817.

Larpent was critical of historical novels that dramatised lives of people in the past. She wrote that, 'De Genlis merely dramatizes [sic] exciting memoirs in her historical novels...St. Beal appears to me to have succeeded best in such works—Fontaines to me were too dull...the want of imagination & romance in Miss Knights Romances bringing them nearer his story gives them more merit'.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, historical fiction was best when it did not have 'imagination & romance' which would obscure the facts of the past. Here, again, it is clear that the genre influenced how Larpent chose to read a text.

### **Periodicals and Taste**

Anna Larpent was a keen consumer of periodicals. In a similar manner to her consumption of books on history and contemporary events, she used periodicals and newspapers to understand the political world around her, while continuing to act as a cultural critic in matters of literary achievement and taste. By Larpent's day, the periodical press had been flourishing for many decades. Richard Steele's *Tatler* and Joseph Addison and Steele's *Spectator* were early successes, most particularly the *Spectator*. This publication played a crucial role in disseminating ideas of politeness throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> By the end of the century, the *Spectator* was considered 'a classic'.<sup>58</sup> From 1790 into the first decades of the nineteenth century, Anna Larpent regularly read *The Times*, as well as the *Spectator*, *Monthly Review*, *Critical Review*, *The Evening Mail*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, and the *British Critic*, among others. These publications held a wealth of information. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, for example, founded in 1731, contained information on

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<sup>56</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/4, 31 Mar. 1817. See Ideal Reader chapter for more on De Genlis, pp. 74-75.

<sup>57</sup> For more on periodicals and politeness, see Brewer, *English culture*, p. 100-101.

<sup>58</sup> Brewer, *English culture*, p. 101.



politics and international affairs, science and literature, art and agriculture, prices and bankruptcies, as well as births, marriages and deaths.<sup>59</sup> Larpent filled her diary with daily accounts of periodical and news reading. She studied *The Times*, with great attention to political debate, on topics such as the ‘Catholic Question’ and the Poor Laws, for example. Periodicals were a fundamental aspect of Larpent’s reading life.

Larpent’s consumption of news media demonstrates her engagement with the political sphere. In 1826, her accounts of reading the *Quarterly Review* and the *Evening Mail* detailed her thoughts on matters such as the Australian colonies, the American president, John Quincy Adams, West Indian slavery, Corn Laws and Joint Stock Companies.<sup>60</sup> On several occasions, she commented on the American president, saying in 1826, ‘Reading....read Adam the Presidents speech in America. I think it excellent in parts Beautiful’.<sup>61</sup> In 1827 she remarks on the American president again: ‘Reading...Evening Mail in which Adam’s speech or declaration. The American president must matter badly, I think worded, arrangement clear, diction bad’.<sup>62</sup> Larpent’s awareness of the political world, and significantly, the transatlantic world, was an important goal of her reading of periodicals. She explicitly sought out political articles in journals.<sup>63</sup> Conjointly, her study of geography and maps, as already mentioned, would have provided a visual sense of geographical space, particularly important at a time of an expanding British empire. Print provided access to this information and enabled her to take a political position on topics relevant to an increasingly global society.

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<sup>59</sup> Brewer, *English culture*, p. 608.

<sup>60</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, Jan.-Apr. 1826.

<sup>61</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 06 Jan. 1826.

<sup>62</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 04 Jan. 1827.

<sup>63</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 11 Jan. 1827.

Larpent read periodical articles as a literary judge, looking for acceptable writing style and a sensible argument. In the following excerpt, she found both lacking:

Reading Edinburgh review. No. 1 Article cause & prevention of Pauperism excessively labored [sic], stiff affected stile [sic]--& the argument reduced to these positions.—let the poor be supported by voluntary gifts & from the affection of the rich & one another, & give them religious early education. Now it appears to me that the question to be resolved is how best to do away the administration of the poor laws. What too absolute if you cancel them. How to regulate upon retain them.<sup>64</sup>

Larpent was a discerning reader. While criticising the ‘stiff affected stile’, she also found the argument insufficient. Again, she was unafraid in her diary to raise points of contention with textual content and argument. In an entry almost a decade later, she criticised the *Quarterly Review* for containing articles on ‘superficial’ subjects: ‘Reading. Qu. Review. Articles. Scientific Instructions, Architectural Improvements in London. These entertained me, but seem to me very weak superficial subjects. More for a Magazine’.<sup>65</sup> The comment ‘more for a magazine’, strikes a belittling tone (even though she conceded that the subjects were entertaining), implying that magazines were an inferior category of reading material. Here, Larpent adjudicated as an arbiter of acceptable publication. Again, it is clear that she believed in intellectual hierarchies. For Larpent, magazines contained ‘superficial subjects’, of lesser value than books. This attitude was another facet of Larpent’s reading enterprise.

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<sup>64</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/4, 24 June 1817.

<sup>65</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 28 July 1826.

Larpent stated her well-informed opinions in her diary, without shying away from strong assertions considered ‘unfeminine’. This implies that she could have expressed political thoughts in conversation, as diarists often wrote as a way to practice verbal expression. Conversely, it could be argued that an opinion in a diary would have been bolder than one expressed in conversation, especially in polite circles where no subject discussed was to offend or disrupt the peace and harmony of a gathering. Still, committing a thought to paper was a powerful claim to a political point of view, not simply an avoidance of verbal expression. Even if one did not intend a diary for others’ eyes, as paper documentation, a diary left a legacy of one’s thoughts for posterity, especially in a period when the content of manuscript texts was as significant as the content of printed texts. Therefore, because Larpent expressed strong opinions in her diary, it is possible to conclude that she would have also discussed her opinions in conversation.

Reading aloud, another way to improve one’s own verbal expression, was a tremendously important reading behaviour of the time. Often, Larpent alluded to listening to her sons or husband reading. Conversation, as discussed throughout this thesis, was a key method for achieving politeness in enlightened society, as espoused by philosophical thinkers such as David Hume.<sup>66</sup> Larpent, though not as social as the bluestockings, involved herself in the enlightened discussions of her day. She wrote of attending ‘circles’.<sup>67</sup> Her reading would have benefitted and allowed her to master the art of conversation.

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<sup>66</sup> David Hume wrote that, ‘among the arts of conversation no one pleases more than mutual deference or civility, which leads us to resign our own inclinations to those of our companions, and to curb and conceal that presumption and arrogance so natural to the human mind.’ D. Hume, *Essays and treatises on several subjects*. By David Hume, esq; In four volumes. ... . Containing essays, moral, political, and literary. Part I. (London, 1760), p. 209.

<sup>67</sup> On 05 Feb. 1790 she wrote, ‘Spent the Evening at Mrs Sargents, the Provost of Eton, & Mrs Roberts & Mrs Smith of Cooper’s Hill there. Almost a blue stocking circle’. BL, Larpent, M1016/1.

Periodicals, besides containing stories on news and providing material for literary criticism, also served a practical purpose. Larpent used the published book reviews as guides to purchasing or reading books. For example, the *Monthly Review* provided her with a list of books she was interested in reading:

Machenzie's Voyage from Montreal through N. America

Soulaire's Memoirs of Lewis 16<sup>th</sup>

Malby's Illustrations of the Xtian Religion

Miss Hamilton's letters on Education

Bowlers Poems

Hales Sermon. Reflections on the War <sup>68</sup>

Similarly, she read the *Revue Encyclopédique*, a monthly French journal on art and science, for reviews on French books.<sup>69</sup> This periodical appears for the first time in the later diaries, during the late 1820s. Her openness to French publications at this time strikes a contrast to earlier comments about corrupt French novelists. It could be inferred that the change represented the wider shift in Anglo-French relations at this time, after peace had been restored between the two countries and the monarchy had been restored in France. Socially and politically, the country across the channel appeared a safer, less combustible place in the eyes of many English people. Robespierre's terror of the 1790s was long over and Napoleon was no longer a threat. It is not surprising that Larpent would have been more willing to engage with the French literary scene in this newly-calmed climate. Periodicals like the *Revue Encyclopédique* could have provided information on books in line with Larpent's interests.

Larpent's used the criterion of 'taste' to evaluate her reading, particularly her reading of periodicals. Men and women

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<sup>68</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/2, 8 Oct. 1802.

<sup>69</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 17 Nov. 1826.

judged culture in this period according to the dictates of taste. Samuel Johnson defined ‘taste’ as ‘intellectual relish or discernment’.<sup>70</sup> According to Archibald Alison (1757-1839), Scottish Episcopal clergyman and writer on aesthetics, taste was ‘the Faculty of the human Mind, by which we perceive and enjoy, whatever is Beautiful or Sublime in the works of Nature or Art’.<sup>71</sup> As Amanda Vickery has shown, taste was a ‘thoroughly new way of understanding culture’ in the Georgian period. ‘It emerged in the literary debate between the ancients and the moderns, proposed as a mode of discernment that was courtly, *mondain* and often female, which could be demonstrated without academic education or steeping in the classics’.<sup>72</sup> Larpent judged poetry and art according to sensibilities of taste as well as read books that discussed the idea of taste. In the following excerpt she criticised the *Edinburgh Review* for containing irrelevant articles, with bad style and ‘no taste’:

Reading Edinburgh rev. No. 55. A very dull one laboured articles & very uninteresting—one on unusual Parliaments may be well done as to investigation of the subject but is mere statement in consequence of research & that on foreign policy is contemptibly ill arranged & obscure—There is no taste in any one article very dull subjects—A catalogue & abstract of the proceedings of the Geological forming a very useless article for most readers.<sup>73</sup>

Larpent said the articles in the *Edinburgh Review* were tasteless for their pedantic, irrelevant nature. The fact that even articles in

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<sup>70</sup> S. Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language, second edition* (London, 1755), ‘TAS’.

<sup>71</sup> A. Archibald. *Essays on the nature and principles of taste. By the Revd. Archibald Alison* (Dublin, 1790). Introduction.

<sup>72</sup> A. Vickery, *Behind closed doors: at home in Georgian England* (London, 2009), p. 18.

<sup>73</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/ 4, 15 July 1817.

a periodical were judged for their taste (which she underlined), demonstrates how critical the quality was Larpent, the reader.

As a particular critic of drama, Anna Larpent sought out taste in plays as well. In the following, she commented on a famous tragedy of the time saying, 'Evening again at the Play...—Mrs. Siddons in Lady Randolph in Douglas. I never was more painfully delighted.—Douglas is a charming Poem in itself—such admirable simplicity yet such Classical taste—such beautiful descriptions--& so well acted...A very pleasant Evening'.<sup>74</sup> Larpent's enjoyment of *Douglas*, a widely successful tragedy by John Home, in which Sarah Siddons famously played Lady Randolph, sheds more light on Larpent's definition of taste. The allusion to 'Classical taste' demonstrates the importance of the ancient world, in this instance. Mention of 'admirable simplicity' implies that taste should not be ostentatious, but elegant. There was a cultural standard of refined correctness and decorum. Additionally, beauty was required, shown here in the phrase 'beautiful descriptions'. Taste was not only about behaviour, but aesthetic pleasure. Finally, the appreciation of good acting is notable because, at other times, Larpent was highly critical of some actors who drifted away from propriety and 'manly decorum'. Here, she showed that, because the actors performed within the boundaries of acceptable taste, the effort was commendable. For Larpent, then, taste was an aesthetic ideal, which incorporated classical refinement, correct behaviour, and elegance. Taste was an important category used by Larpent to judge her cultural consumption, including her reading. Employment of this category represents another specific reading strategy.

### **Reading as 'Therapy'**

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<sup>74</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 24 Apr., 1792.

Anna Larpent's engagement with print involved more than just literary review. Her encounter and digestion of the written word acted as a method for managing difficult feelings. In particular, when Larpent suffered periods of distress, she turned to reading for comfort. For example, early in 1790, when her youngest son, George, became ill, she wrote of her severe anxiety and how, when the worst danger passed, she was able to read a novel to calm her worries:

I had been up all night, for late in the night the Inflammatory [sic] Spasms were so alarming, and threatened attacking some vital part, that the child was put into the warm bath...At intervals, I took up *Louisa. A Novel*, by Mr. Harvey, which just dissipated my mind now & then...There certainly was an amendment in the child; the symptoms were less violent...I could at intervals today, take up *Louisa. A Novel*, which amused me.<sup>75</sup>

She noted that the novel first distracted her from her worries, then amused her. Many years later she wrote of turning to reading again, this time at news of the sickness of George's wife, Charlotte. 'My mind disturbed & anxious concerning Charlotte's state. I felt the necessity of mental exertion. I began the 9<sup>th</sup> Ch. Of Mitford's history of Greece Alexander's reign'.<sup>76</sup> A couple of days later she explained, 'Read 45 & part of 46. chap. of Mitford's Greece. Also looked over the Female Quixote merely to divert my mind from numbness of Charlotte, but it was too absurd'.<sup>77</sup> These examples show how Larpent used reading to distract herself from her worries about ill family members. She sought to exert her mind

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<sup>75</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 16 and 19 Jan. 1790.

<sup>76</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 13 June 1826

<sup>77</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 15 June 1826

and divert her thoughts away from such concerns through disciplined reading. In this sense, the reading acted, in present-day terms, as psychological therapy. Larpent chose to read in times of anxiety as a conscious strategy to calm her mind and heart.

Only in the most challenging times did she find reading impossible. For example in April of 1803 she wrote of spending a whole day in oppressed 'spirits', saying, 'I spent the whole of this day in a most pitiful, painful manner; my spirits much oppressed. My temper much irritated from their being so—I could settle to nothing.—I read, I wrote, I worked, without any energy—My head confined'.<sup>78</sup> She became frustrated when she was unable to concentrate on her reading or 'read anything in that sort of followed manner to be of use in the recollection'.<sup>79</sup> The 'followed manner' suggests her usual dedicated, disciplined and fulfilling engagement with reading. The phrase, 'of use in the recollection', also implies reading to be committed to memory. Unable to read as she desired whilst in low moods, Larpent became even more frustrated.

Larpent's reading as therapy interlaced with her reading as faith practice. Piety served in a similar way to improve her mood. She often wrote about using her religion as a way to maintain a calmness of mind and to avoid feeling dispirited. Larpent described being in a 'state of depression' in the following example from 1795:

Rose low & ill at 8. Prayed. Breakfasted early. Settled 2 weeks house bills—worked the rest of the morning in an inconceivable state of depression. Inconceivable to all but myself—but really such horror of mind as I at times suffer

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<sup>78</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/2, 4 Apr. 1803

<sup>79</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/3, 14 Jan. 1813.



from, would sink me into despair were it not for the support of Religion & trust in the Almighty.<sup>80</sup>

She said that if it were not for the ‘support of Religion’, she would sink into ‘despair’. As her religious practice relied so heavily on the consumption of the written word, it is reasonable to conclude that Larpent’s reading served in some cases as an emotional support, a therapeutic remedy for ‘such horror of mind’. She stated that her depression (which is understood here as dejection or low spirits, rather than the present-day, pathologised definition of clinical depression) was inconceivable to all but herself. Larpent did not share her horrors of mind openly, but she did use her diary as a venue to express distress. Her religion, supported by a strategy of pious reading, prevented her from sinking into despair.

In her own words, Larpent found joy in gaining ‘ideas quickly’ and she complained when she did ‘not gain one useful idea’.<sup>81</sup> She was her most expressive when describing her thoughts or feelings about her reading. Her diary provided a conversation with herself which analysed what she saw, heard, read and tried to understand, ‘particularly in the great book of Life’.<sup>82</sup> She conceptualised her world as a book to be read and understood, in the same way as she literally read and analysed her reading each day. Larpent considered herself a ‘thinking mind’. ‘Of course’, she stated on 1 January 1827, ‘the first day of a new year must be one of much reflection to a thinking mind & I am 68!’<sup>83</sup> Larpent identified as an intellectual through readership. That identity was cultivated throughout her life, becoming an increasing source of pride over time.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 30 Apr. 1795.

<sup>81</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 14 Mar. 1792; BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 29 Jan. 1827.

<sup>82</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, beginning of 1796 diary.

<sup>83</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/5, 1 Jan. 1827.

<sup>84</sup> This quote also shows the importance of marking the passage of time and one’s age in a diary. John Marsh marked his age, measured down to the quarter of the year, next to almost all entries. Thomas Hollis noted his age in relation to his goal to remain steady in the cause of liberty. The marking of age seems to confirm a self-

Larpent found great joy in reading. In the following passage, she described *Barham's Travels through North America*:

This work amused me very much. It describes a country, animals, people, manners, quite new to me—very interestingly wonderful! The natural productions of America—the conduct & character of the Indians. All open the mind to contemplations which highly gratified me. Barham writes with Affectation—often in a stile [sic] ridiculously figurative—set with a spirit & originality that carries one on—His Botanical researches gave me pleasure & information.<sup>85</sup>

She used phrases such as ‘interestingly wonderful’ and ‘highly gratified’. She combined the word ‘pleasure’ with ‘information’. This is reminiscent of the phrase ‘instruction and amusement’ as found in reading prescriptions already described in this thesis.<sup>86</sup> However, ‘pleasure and information’ is a more empowered phrase, as it suggests a stronger degree of enjoyment and the satisfaction of digesting information chosen by the reader, rather than the prescriptive guidance of instruction. Larpent read actively, and strategically for a purpose; in this case, the purpose was learning as enjoyment. While reading served to alleviate dejection, it was also a source of satisfaction for an intellectually curious and eager mind.

### **Reading, the Life-Cycle and Domestic Education**

Anna Larpent's diaries provide one of the best examples of the effect of life-cycle on a reader. As a mother, Larpent dedicated her

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imposed identity or life mission. The birthday is marked almost as a force of discipline in the fulfilment of self-actualisation. The attainment of goals, as already mentioned, was propelled by reading for action and the noting of one's birthday was a measure of time related to whether aims had been achieved.

<sup>85</sup> BL, Larpent M1016/1, 13 Jan. 1793.

<sup>86</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter, p. 74.

thirties and early forties to tutoring her three sons. Her reading life in her later years, after 1804, when she was able to dedicate plenty of time to her studies, was more reflective than her younger years. In this period, she structured her days around reading, reviewing books in her diary. She was able to undertake more religious reading in particular. Larpent was satisfied in the awareness that she was bettering herself through reading and piety as she got older.

From 1790 to 1804, Larpent spent a considerable portion of each day teaching her children. Her own reading enabled the education of her sons. She instructed them in reading and writing, grammar, religion, astronomy, French, history, maths, Classics, literature and geography, spending about an average of 3 hours a day on this duty if her sons were at home from school. She spent close to this amount of time instructing the youngest, George, each day before he started school. She described lessons with her boys as 'routines'.

Larpent used a variety of teaching techniques. These included reading to her sons, hearing them read to her, conversing with them on relevant subjects, training them to use multiplication tables and providing maps in the study of geography. In December of 1792, she described a day of teaching her boys, including the elder two, recently home from school for the holidays:

Taught John to read Sacred Hist & heard him say the Multiplication Table & place the Maps of Europe & Asia, which study arose from his reading the history of David & wishing to understand, the country—the commerce &c—then George spelt. Red [sic] in Sandford & Merton—said the Latin Grammar & Multiplication Table—taught both Boys much geography by Maps & Conversation—dressed. Dined. Till Tea I showed them prints of the History of England—

which led to a detail of the History—I related many parts of History to them, the jurisdiction of things &c. Much eager enquiring commencement on their part—After tea Seymour & I played 2 games of Chess.<sup>87</sup>

Larpent employed a variety of teaching methods, including tables, maps, books, prints, conversation and games. She spent the majority of this day in aid of her children's learning, utilising a range of resources and devoting a considerable amount of energy to the effort.

Even when Larpent was not engaged in teaching her children directly, she would spend time reading books to aid her understanding of necessary subjects for their education, preparing lessons and writing letters to her boys on important subjects. In March of 1790, she recorded in her diary, 'then for an hour I wrote general notes from Bevers observations, that I judged might be useful to my Boys when they study Roman History'.<sup>88</sup> In June of 1790, she wrote long letters to Seymour at school about French history. Larpent mentioned reading French history to help Seymour on four consecutive days in the middle of this month, remarking that her 'reading lately had been chiefly for that purpose'.<sup>89</sup> She spent the evening reading books for her children on 11 January 1792.<sup>90</sup> In March of 1792, she wrote that she spent an hour 'forming Lessons of Geography ample enough for (George)... to understand and copy'.<sup>91</sup> On 24 June of the same year, she copied extracts from William Smellie's *The Philosophy of Natural History* for the use of her children.<sup>92</sup> On 9 June 1793 Larpent noted that she had spent the whole morning writing

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<sup>87</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 17 Dec. 1792.

<sup>88</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 22 Mar. 1790.

<sup>89</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, June 1790.

<sup>90</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 11 Jan. 1792.

<sup>91</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 26 Mar. 1792.

<sup>92</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 24 June 1792.

extracts for her boys.<sup>93</sup> Larpent spent significant time in aid of her sons' education.

Even when she was less knowledgeable about a subject, Larpent committed herself to its mastery by her sons. She had no formal training in Latin and Greek herself, but she still aided her children in these languages. For example, on 26 July 1797 she wrote about her knowledge of classical languages: 'Instructed George as follows. 1<sup>st</sup> heard his Greek Grammar. Then he translated 4 English sentences into Latin. Now I understand neither Greek nor Latin, but from habit I know the characters of the first, from observation reflection, & grammar can give hints on the latter'.<sup>94</sup> Women in this period usually did not have classical training.<sup>95</sup> Even though she had no formal instruction in Latin or Greek, Larpent devoted herself to assisting her sons in classical learning. She did know enough about Greek characters to tutor her sons in this regard. She was interested and had read enough in Latin to guide them in that language as well. This attention to subject areas less studied by Larpent herself reveals significant dedication to the education of her boys. Larpent was aware of an educator's important responsibility as well as the level of knowledge required. She observed on 19 January 1792, 'how much one ought to know to teach others well'.<sup>96</sup>

After 1804, when Larpent no longer wrote of teaching her children who had begun or established their careers. Larpent was 46 and she began to devote more time to her own betterment through reading. Many of the examples of active criticism have come from this latter stage of her life. She became increasingly religious and devoted to religious print consumption, as well as intent on reading even more in this period. She described observations and opinions on her reading throughout her diary,

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<sup>93</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 9 June 1793.

<sup>94</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 26 July 1797.

<sup>95</sup> See *Ideal Reader* chapter, p. 79.

<sup>96</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/1, 19 Jan. 1792.

but from this point on, Larpent began to fill entire pages with reflections on books. In the mid 1820s, she was reading *The Times* daily. On some days, she recorded spending at least three hours on her individual reading, taking up additional time to reflect in the pages of her diary. She dedicated the majority of her diary after 1804 to judgments on her reading, dividing her recollections of her days into the following categories: 'Reading, Writing, Work, Society, and Exercise'. In 1817, Larpent admitted that her recollections on her reading served as a 'second conscience'.<sup>97</sup> In this later period in her life, Larpent became more confident in her position as a critical intellectual.

### **Larpent as 'Author'**

Though Larpent did not publish her book reviews, she wrote as though it were her role to write informed opinions, which she relished. While she did not write her diary for a wider public, she did leave it to her family. She stated at the beginning of her methodized journal that she intended for her husband and her sister to read the journal. To her husband she wrote, 'Live over my life in this book. See how I spent it--& by what means I have formed my mind.—praise me where you can. Condemn me where you must. But Love me every where'.<sup>98</sup> In this request, Larpent attempted to shape how her family would 'read' her life in the future. She intended that her sons would read her observations on her daily studies to help them with their own learning.<sup>99</sup> Though she never showed any intention of publication, Larpent's address to her family hints at a document to be shared rather than one written solely for the author. Larpent can be conceptualised as an

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<sup>97</sup> BL, Larpent, M1016/4, 07 Jan. 1817.

<sup>98</sup> BL, Larpent's methodized journal, M1016/7, 1773-1780.

<sup>99</sup> BL, Larpent's methodized journal, M1016/7, 1773-1780.

unpublished author who left a legacy to her family in the form of a diary, which has survived to the present-day.<sup>100</sup> She was an intellectual who enjoyed the digestion and analysis of ideas and felt confident in her voice as a cultural critic.

## **Conclusion**

Larpent's reading was an active reading. This chapter has developed arguments contrary to accounts that find a distinction between Larpent's reading of history and politics as a 'passive recipient' in contrast to the position of 'active critic' with novels and poetry. Undoubtedly, there is a difference in her interaction with these different categories, but that contrast was the result of Larpent's understanding of the varied nature of the texts themselves, as well as Larpent's own goals for the reading of these texts. Based on her diverse modes of reading, it is clear that the nature of fiction versus non-fiction prompted Larpent to read the genres for different purposes. She also read books and periodicals with an eye to judging elements she considered specific to particular genres. Reader-response theory has to take into account the nature of the text in question to discover how the reader intended to consume the work and to what purpose. Indeed, if texts do not operate in a vacuum, then neither do their readers. Both rely on the other and both influence the other. In the period, politics, history and biography were considered to be informative. Larpent chose to read them with this goal in mind, but this was still a choice. Her strategies for assessing the genre were also chosen and she did not describe herself as cowed by a 'masculine monopoly of classical learning'.

Larpent certainly respected the authority of authors, but she did not defer to them and she was often critical, of both novels

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<sup>100</sup> See discussion of 'authorial identity' in Barlow, 'Female writers', p. 16.

and histories, when writers did not meet her expectations.<sup>101</sup> She was not passive in her reception of non-fiction. Though Larpent operated in a culture of gendered expectations for reading, her contrasting reading styles reflected her requirements and strategies for each genre, rather than her gender or personality. She believed in categories such as 'feminine delicacy' and 'manly decorum' and she believed that women should not 'write for bread'. In his sense, she was a product of her times and the gendered nature of eighteenth-century print culture. However, as a reader, she did not read in a 'masculine' or 'feminine' mode. Gender was central to the reading culture of her time, but it did not affect 'how' she read.

Larpent admired works by women, while disapproving of women earning a living through writing.<sup>102</sup> It is paradoxical that Larpent could only enjoy the works of women who were prepared to behave in a way that she considered unacceptable. However, this deference to polite gender norms alongside the enjoyment of authorial outcomes produced outside the boundaries of such norms was not paradoxical to Larpent. She was willing to commend women authors, but did not approve of them writing for a livelihood. Nevertheless, it has been argued that this could have been Larpent's reaction to the increasing number of women novelists on the scene, as well as a self-conscious awareness of her position as a female literary critic within her diary.

The chapter has emphasised the ubiquity of books, while also spotlighting the abundance of other printed matter, particularly periodicals. Larpent read periodicals with similar aims to the reading of books, and she judged them for similar qualities: literary style, usefulness as a source of information, enjoyment and practicality as a guide to other reading. As in all things, she was eager to judge taste in a work, even a periodical article. Her

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<sup>101</sup> Brewer, *English culture*, p. 197.

<sup>102</sup> Brewer, 'Reader', p. 232.



position as unofficial cultural critic required a keen eye for distinguishing taste and, indeed, authors of articles in polite print media aimed to appeal to a genteel class of reader, often female, with this in mind.

Larpent read in order to manage feelings. This ‘therapeutic’ reading took place in times of distress when she wanted to distract herself from worrisome thoughts or lift her spirits. Such reading was an aspect of her religious practice also, whereby she practiced her faith, in part, to overcome depression. It has been argued by historians that Larpent was concerned with ‘order and clarity’ and rising above sensation to the intellect.<sup>103</sup> In fact, in some respects she was emotionally reliant on her reading. Larpent examined feelings in the context of her reading habits.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, intellectualism and the passions cannot be easily split in the study of reading. Processing texts involved the mental digestion of printed words loaded with meaning and significance for the reader. Active readers like Larpent read a wide diversity of texts, personally chosen, which had the potential to affect both heart and mind in varying degrees, through diverse interpretive processes relevant to each individual.

Of course, intellectualism was still a significant trait of Anna Larpent, ‘the reader’. Not only did she strive throughout her life to ‘gain ideas’, but she identified as a thinker. She was confident in her critical judgement. She believed in serious reflection. But again, this serious reflection was not passionless. Larpent received joy and excitement from her reading and had an ardent love of learning. The extensive records she left of her literary habits and the expressive language she used to describe her books are testament to such an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. The portrait of Larpent ‘the reader and thinker’ should be painted keeping the accessory of feeling in the composition.

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<sup>103</sup> Brewer, ‘Reader’, p. 236.

<sup>104</sup> See Occupational Reader chapter, Bluestocking Reader chapter and Romantic Reader chapter for further discussions on feelings and reading.

Larpent's reading also reflected cultural influences of her time. Her approach to the education of her sons was in line with contemporary theories on the instruction of boys. She gave them lessons that would prepare them to be well-bred gentlemen of benefit to society. Her dedication to teaching her sons the classics was indicative of the value she placed on contemporary expectations for genteel male education. Political events of Larpent's day also affected her reading. She followed the French Revolution closely, and her opinion towards the French people and French literature varied according to the level of unrest across the channel. The cultural atmosphere of Larpent's day influenced her practice and interpretation of her reading.

This chapter has considered the materiality of Anna Larpent's reading. If texts and readers rely on one another, texts rely on their physical forms, as do their readers. Larpent, in this case study, cared about her books as objects. Certain aesthetic aspects appealed. She noted the attractiveness of the engravings and the typeset on several occasions. She also considered and judged the layout of books. Such qualities highlight print as a product designed for consumption in a diversifying and demand-driven market. Book historians focus on this issue and it is a critical question in the consideration of reading practice. Larpent was usual in her ability to obtain reading (she was unusual with drama manuscripts, of course, but not reading generally). Her access to print culture makes her representative of the relatively wealthy woman in the capital buying and borrowing books.

While Anna Larpent's world of reading was interior, serving intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs, rather than reading for action in publication like the bluestockings, she engaged in active criticism of the texts she read. She was not passive when it came to the digestion of print, and she critically accessed her reading in a manner similar to the bluestockings. The bluestockings chapter aimed to demonstrate women's grounding in extensive, often

classical, reading habits, which allowed them to achieve success publicly. Larpent revolved in a similar world of textual consumption and would have engaged in literary conversation, even though she did not express her opinions on a wider stage of publication. In this sense, her world of reading was not as different to that of the more 'public' writers of the bluestocking model.

While similarities are clear between the bluestockings and Anna Larpent, Hollis presents a greater contrast. Hollis' reading experience involved using print and text to spread ideas. This public reading differed from the inner world of Larpent's reading. Her interpersonal relationships and 'print network' involved her family: reading to her children and husband, and hearing them read to her. While she was also involved in conversation circles, similar to those of the bluestockings, most of her reading revolved around her domestic life, her own critical reviews within her diary and the education of her sons. Larpent was not involved in publishing at all and frowned upon women being authors or working for money. Unlike Hollis and his philosophical mission, Larpent's main commitment was to a virtuous life of intellectual and moral good, supported by reading. Like the middling men studied earlier, Larpent's reading also assisted her family. However, it is important to emphasise her own passion for reading, which was the main impetus behind her life-long commitment to print consumption.

In the thesis thus far, there have been no restrictions on genres chosen to read by men or women. The chapters have shown that readers chose books and genres depending on their own purposes. Thus, men representative of eighteenth-century middling masculinity often chose books to better their careers. Hollis chose books to further the cause of liberty. Talbot and Montagu chose classical reading and learning to enable their literary efforts. Larpent enjoyed books that she could review

critically. Readers chose varied genres. Hollis enjoyed history and biography, as did Larpent, amongst many other genres, including novels and theology. John Marsh liked law books, as well as novels, and Matthew Flinders enjoyed poetry. Catherine Talbot read history and politics, as well as novels. Genres of reading and interpretations varied according to readers' goals.

The case of Anna Larpent represents a consistent level of print consumption in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Her diaries reveal a daily regimen of reading, which, overall, occupied a significant portion of her entire life. Investigations into what she read, how she read, why she read and how she reacted to the reading reveal a newly focused image of a woman's print consumption in the period. As a wealthy woman in polite, literary circles, Larpent had wide access to a massive amount of print. Her reading of so many books and periodicals afforded expansive opportunities for intellectual improvement, cultural criticism, global awareness, religious practice, emotional support and education of children. The material culture within which her reading took place and her courageous daily literary regime reveal Anna Larpent to have been an active, critically engaged reader.

## Chapter Seven

### The Romantic Reader

Anne Lister (1791-1840) is famous for being the 'first modern lesbian', but she is less known for being a strenuous autodidact who filled her life with strict reading regimes from the morning to the night.<sup>1</sup> Reading was an integral part of her daily routine from which she hoped to gain intellectual, emotional and social self-improvement. Books gave her practical knowledge in aid of running her estate, contemporary news of the world around her, amusement and relaxation, as well classical learning. Greek and Latin provided Lister with a sense of elevated social status. In her relationships, literature gave her a language of allusion to communicate with lovers and potential lovers, a necessity considering that the mores of the day forbade explicit verbal exchange about such relationships.<sup>2</sup> Emotionally, Lister's reading also served as a salve to internal distress. At these times, she wrote that her only chance of comfort was in books and a 'rigorous & unrelaxed occupant [sic] of mind'.<sup>3</sup> Lister used her reading to justify her position as 'special', intellectually and socially, and thus her books were central to her identity and daily routine as a lover of women.

After moving away from home in her youth to live with her unmarried aunt and unmarried uncle in Shibden Hall, Lister spent most of her adult life in Halifax, Yorkshire, other than time spent travelling in Britain and abroad. She inherited Shibden Hall upon her uncle's death in 1826, and ran the estate herself, making significant alterations to the house as well as opening a

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<sup>1</sup> Norton, 'Lister'.

<sup>2</sup> A. Clark has demonstrated this in her article, 'Anne Lister's construction of lesbian identity', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 7 (July, 1996), pp. 23-50.

<sup>3</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/1, 12 July 1817. The full statement was, 'I feel my spirits rath bet tho' I am well convincd my only chance of comfort is in rigorous & unrelaxed occupatn of mind—I must rouse myself by ev enforcement (?) of emulation & study as hard as I can'.

colliery. The details of her life are accessible now, after over a hundred years of invisibility, through the extensive diary kept by Lister throughout her life.<sup>4</sup> Helena Whitbread has transcribed and published the diary in part, but the manuscript is also available in full from the West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale.<sup>5</sup> Findings used in this chapter have been taken from the manuscript diary as well from Whitbread's two editions.<sup>6</sup>

### **Anne Lister and the Historians**

In addition to details about her plans for management and maintenance of her estate and her tenants, her travels, as well as her energetic and wide-ranging reading habits, Lister's diary is most famous for its revelation of same-sex love in the early nineteenth century. At this time, close relationships between women were thought to go no further than 'romantic friendship', that is a passionate relationship that lacked physical sexual interaction. Anna Clark has noted the concerted effort made by Lister to forge a real 'lesbian' (sexual) identity without the use of a 'script' or sub-culture to find models and reinforcement. This runs counter to Foucault's famous assertion that the homosexual was 'invented' in the late nineteenth century. Clark argues that Lister formed her identity purposefully around three impulses: her own temperament and inherent desire, her material circumstances and the cultural representations available to her.<sup>7</sup> In accordance with Clark's assessment, this chapter will sometimes use the term

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 4 for reproduced sections of Lister's manuscript diary.

<sup>5</sup> Her diaries contain more than 4,000,000 words and about one sixth of them are written in code to hide details of her love affairs. Whitbread has decoded many of these passages, and I have used her translations when necessary. Other excerpts not relating to Lister's romantic encounters are taken from my own transcriptions of the manuscript diaries at WYAS.

<sup>6</sup> Lister wrote the manuscript in an abbreviated format. She wrote so much in each entry, the tiny writing and abbreviated words seems to have been a way of saving paper and writing more quickly. See Appendix 4. I have retained her abbreviations in the excerpts used here. In the excerpts from the manuscript diary, I have used my own italics and question marks for words that were unclear.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, 'Lesbian identity', p. 27.

lesbian to indicate sexuality, even though Lister did not use this term. Research for this chapter explores the third element of Clark's argument, examining how Lister used her reading and books to form identity and to communicate her sexual interests to others. Further analysis will address how she used reading in an attempt to elevate her social status, alleviate emotional anxiety, retrieve practical knowledge about the disciplined running of an estate and provide entertainment and amusement. Lesbianism is assessed in some parts of this chapter, particularly in relation to communicating with potential lovers. However, overall the Lister debate can be expanded beyond sexuality to conceive of her as a strenuous reader who used books for social, intellectual and emotional purposes. The focus is not solely on lesbianism, in this case, but on literature.

### **Accessibility to Books**

Lister borrowed books from libraries as well as bought them from local bookshops. Her wealth allowed her to accumulate books to form her own library at home, but the circulating library as a place of borrowing and as a reading location was critical to her reading habits. She wrote frequently of walking 'down the Old Bank to the H.C.L.' (Halifax Circulating Library) where she spent time browsing and reading. She had a working relationship with the librarian who would order books especially for her. She even paid him five shillings twice a year to allow her to take out as many books at a time as she wanted.<sup>8</sup> She was keenly interested in alterations to the library in Halifax and complained of the 'awkward, ugly, inconvenient manner in which the entrance' was contrived in January of 1818.<sup>9</sup> When she went to Buxton Spa for a visit, she paid a monthly subscription to have access to their

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<sup>8</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 113, 4 Jan. 1820.

<sup>9</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 35, 12 Jan. 1818.

library.<sup>10</sup> She also investigated the library at Calais.<sup>11</sup> For Anne Lister to obtain books, library borrowing and visiting were crucial.

Lister used libraries and bookshops as venues for reading. The two complemented one another as portals to reading material. The following exemplifies her reading habits in Halifax:

Aft breakst lookg in my lit dict of nat hist by way of preparatn bef seeing Pohto's Menagerie wch is come to ye town for a day or two....calld at Whitley's for some rd ink & std an hour and a half lookg at books & rd vol. 1 8 vol Humboldt's personal narrat. of his travs by Helen Maria Williams—went to ye liby sat there an hour & 1/2 & here & at Whitley's rd of ye same vol pref 12 pp. Introduct. Pp. 51 & of ye work itself pp. 50—ye liby all in ye bustle of removg 2 of Whitley's men were repair ye books\_saw books brought in while I was there.<sup>12</sup>

After reading good books from the library, Lister sometimes decided to purchase a copy from the shop for her collection. In other words, library borrowing increased her exposure to books that she could choose to obtain permanently. This is an important point in the debate on library history and accessibility to books. Isobel Grundy has argued that borrowing books 'carried some stigma among the money or cultivated'.<sup>13</sup> Lister does not acknowledge this stigma, though she was keen to build a respectable library to prove social status. The ownership of books was proof of wealth, property and education. However, we should not view the borrowing of books simply as a cheap alternative to purchase, though of course it did serve this purpose. Rather, for

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<sup>10</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 114, 9 Aug. 1825.

<sup>11</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 221, 9 Sept. 1822.

<sup>12</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/1, 17 Jan. 1818. This quote also provides evidence of reading natural history in preparation for seeing a menagerie. In this case, reading providing useful knowledge of the world around Lister. This will be explored later on in the chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Grundy, 'Readers', p. 153.



Lister, borrowing facilitated the purchase of books because it gave her the opportunity to decide if she wanted to invest in a particular text. Lister's exhaustive reading habits, and desire to build a library, necessitated both circulating libraries and bookshops. This is somewhat counter to what Jan Fergus has argued in her work on provincial readers, which presents a dichotomy between buying and borrowing certain books.<sup>14</sup> In Lister's case, both book borrowing and book purchasing allowed her to access most of the books she desired.

### Reading Routines

Lister's routine for reading was elaborate. In general, she could read potentially at all times of the day. She wrote that she would sometimes spend all morning or all afternoon reading. She often woke up early to be at her desk first thing to begin her reading and self-teaching. This was a disciplined routine, if somewhat chaotic at times:

Before breakfast, from 7 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> to 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, & from 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> to 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> (including an interruption of 20 minutes) read v.1304 to 1527, end of *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, & afterwards from p.288 to 296, end of vol. 2, Adam's translation of the 7 remaining plays of Sophocles...I feel myself improved & only hope to continue going on prosperously. It is about 2 years since my first beginning Sophocles (*vid.* Friday, 13 March 1818) but I have had long & many interruptions during this time. Besides, I had then a bad plan of doing many things at once, mixing Latin, Greek, Hebrew & French all in one mess in one day.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Fergus, *Readers*.

<sup>15</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 149, 24 Mar. 1821.

She strove to be 'at her desk' early each morning and felt unhappy if she failed to keep up with her studies. This habit underlines findings by Naomi Tadmor on women's disciplined reading.<sup>16</sup> However, Lister's routine was not as regular as Anna Larpent's. Larpent wrote of reading almost every morning, whereas Lister was more erratic, though no less exhaustive. Lister usually read for several hours at a time and sometimes looked forward to long stretches of reading on end. One rainy day in 1825, she enjoyed the treat of having six hours for reading.<sup>17</sup> Unlike Anna Larpent whose reading routine was consistent due to family commitments, especially raising her children, Lister had the freedom to vary time spent in reading from one day to the next. Most of her reading took place at home. She had bookshelves put up in her closet.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, she read in the library and bookshop, and she read when she travelled. Weather permitting, she would sometimes read in the mornings on her terrace, a new addition to Shibden Hall made by Lister. Occasionally she wrote of reading her Italian grammar while curling her hair.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes Lister read while walking. In general, while the home was the primary centre of reading, Lister's reading also happened in a variety of places and at all times of the day.

The excerpt above also demonstrates Lister's interest in recording page numbers as proof of studious progress. Ploughing through books was a source of satisfaction for Lister who aspired to study as much as possible. Her diary reinforced her disciplined reading habits as it provided a record of books and pages consumed. The manuscript diary also provides evidence to show when she believed she had used her time productively. Such

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<sup>16</sup> Tadmor, 'Reading', p. 165.

<sup>17</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 142, 28 Nov. 1825.

<sup>18</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 224, 9 Oct. 1822. She wrote, 'From 11 ¼ to 2.40, watching Chas. Howarth put up the bookshelves in my closet, & then arranging my books in there—bringing some from the library passage. From 2 ¾ to 4.05, writing the account of the journey'.

<sup>19</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/10, 22 Nov. 1827. Lister wrote, 'Din at 6 5/60...curl'd my hair & stood readg my Italn grammr till 10 25/60'.

details reveal Lister's goals of dedicated reading and self-improvement.

### **The Diary as an Aid to Reading**

Lister used her diary and writing as a study tool to accompany her reading, similar to the early modern practice of commonplacing already been mentioned in this thesis. Frequently, she would copy out the title pages of books she was reading into her diary, as well as list books read in a year. Furthermore, she wrote out a catalogue of books she wanted to read. In her later years, Lister used symbols to mark in the margins of her books passages that particularly interested her. She made corresponding marks in her diary where she wrote thoughts on the passage in her reading. The following is important evidence of how she marked her books in order to keep track of significant sections and points:

I ha begun ye mornng to mark with a pencil or with my pen, ye pasgs that particuy inter me—I shall do this in my own books in all my future reading\_ye marks √ will immedy direct my eye to an thg particuly & ye **S....S** will refer me from ye beging to ye end of an long pass ye who of wch I ought to reference—a single **S** shall ref me to an partic note or obs in my journl and a (*vid.?* *Viz?*) shall indict. something still mo particular...also in ye margin ...(further?) to my having this morning “begun to mark wth a pencil” &c.<sup>20</sup>

Such marks in books demonstrate how Lister read closely in order to refer to material that she deemed important. She spoke of referencing whole passages, as well as marking an **S** in a book to correspond with an observation in her journal. Symbols in books demonstrate a desire to remember reading, as well as easily revisit

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<sup>20</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/6, 13 Oct. 1822.

reading, in the way one would 'highlight' an important passage today.<sup>21</sup> It also reveals how a journal complemented the reading of books, serving as a forum to reflect on one's reading. Combined, these revelations demonstrate the importance of study for Lister's life and her devotion to consumption of the printed word. Again, the act of reading and the act of writing were inseparable as tools for learning and the enjoyment of textual consumption in this period. Conduct literature described this relationship, as did readers in their own accounts of their habits. Reading and writing (along with conversation) were valued sources of learning about the world, as well as necessary sources of emotional comfort or excitement. Furthermore, such habits cemented social ties as well as aided readers in their understanding of themselves and their lives.

Lister's diary also served as a written record of an educational regime and a force of discipline. On the title page of the volume that began in March 1817 Lister wrote: 'I propose from this day to keep an exact journal of my actions and studies, both to assist my memory & to accustom me to set a due value on my time'.<sup>22</sup> She copied that phrase from the introduction to the journal of famous historian, Edward Gibbon. Lister was obsessed with making good use of her time, and not wasting it. She got frustrated when she felt idle and her reading and writing was a way of maintaining diligent employment. On the 14 July 1817 she wrote that she was 'quite uncomfortable and unhappy all the morning' because of her 'idleness'.<sup>23</sup> She was naturally energetic, but she also revealed that activity would keep her from forlorn reflection or moodiness. In an impassioned excerpt in her diary from 1823, she proclaimed:

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<sup>21</sup> See R. Stoddard, *Marks in Books* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), pp. 30-35, for a few examples of readers' annotations in books through the centuries.

<sup>22</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/1, 21 Mar. 1817.

<sup>23</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/1, 14 July 1817.

But away! away! Ye moody thoughts that crowd on me; for 'painful thinking wears our clay'. I shall turn for a while to Urquhart's commentaries on classical learning. O books! books! I owe you much. Ye are my spirit's oil without which, its own friction against itself would wear it out.<sup>24</sup>

In this example, reading served as a soothing agent that distracted her mind from 'moody thoughts'. Some of Lister's determination to remain studious and busy was due to a fear of painful reflection. She hated being bored as well. Lister recorded in her diary in 1820 that she, 'did nothing all evening. Should have given the world to read. Tired of hearing or saying nothing worth a straw'.<sup>25</sup> Whenever she was idle or bored she berated herself or complained. Books and the pen were cures for inactivity.

Lister appeared to have endless energy for not only diary-writing, but listing and cataloguing. The following extract shows her writing out an index for her volume of poetry as well as considering the creation of a 'universal index of similes'.

All the morning till very near 3, copying notes [sic] from loose papers into Extracts, vol. B., & writing out an index to my volume of poetry & scraps for which, by the way, I must find out some more tractable name. One thing occurs to me after another. I have now thought of looking over all my extracts & making a universal index of similes, e.g. strong as Hercules; licentious as Tiberius; modest as Daphne, etc., & to make this index extend thro' all my future reading. It would certainly be useful; for when one wants a good simile, it is often astray.<sup>26</sup>

Again, Lister pursued reading and writing simultaneously. This excerpt also provides evidence of her classical training, as revealed

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<sup>24</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 265, 20 July 1823.

<sup>25</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 137, 10 Nov. 1820.

<sup>26</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 124, 09 May 1820.

earlier with the mention of Sophocles in her reading routine. Additionally, this excerpt shows Lister's strenuousness in all her learned pursuits. Besides distraction from troubled thoughts, positive impulses drove her, such as a simple love and joy of learning, hatred of boredom and the desire to improve herself.

### **Reading and Class Identity**

Reading was a crucial aspect of Lister's class and social identity. She viewed herself as a wealthy member of the landed gentry with access to books and education. By Lister's time, a much larger proportion of the population had access to books than ever before. This was possible through the production of cheaper forms in the later eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> However, book use and reading was still an indicator of wealth, education and privilege. For those lower down the scale, reading could be a method for elevation, as seen in the case of John Cannon.<sup>28</sup> Private libraries in grand houses provided a visible symbol of the owner's wealth, and could indicate the learning of owners of the house.<sup>29</sup> Lister wrote of installing a new bookcase in the passage to her library.<sup>30</sup> This was one of the many renovations she undertook at Shibden Hall to make it seem a residence worthy of her pretensions to a prestigious ancestry. Lister involved herself in landscaping and major renovation works, which often harkened back to the seventeenth century, when the family line was more significant.

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<sup>27</sup> For a useful discussion of the historiography of readership and accessibility see the introduction to Fergus, *Readers*, pp. 1-33.

<sup>28</sup> See Occupational Reader chapter, p. 122.

<sup>29</sup> However, I have highlighted in this thesis the recognised difference between boasting of book ownership and exhibiting learning through study and education. See Elizabeth Montagu's letters to Mr. Freind in the *Bluestocking Reader* chapter, p. 219-220.

<sup>30</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 147, 07 Mar. 1821.

Notably, she had a three storey Gothic tower constructed to house her books. She had modern water closets installed in the structure. Anira Rowanchild has shown that Lister intended her architectural additions to strengthen her social position and importance in her community.<sup>31</sup> The grandiose addition of the Gothic tower would show off her wealth in books and her ancestral legacy. That she constructed a Gothic tower specifically demonstrates the desire to show permanence over time.<sup>32</sup> Old styles of architecture could signify continuity with the past and authenticity.

Lister valued her education highly. She lived in a time of widespread debate over education for women.<sup>33</sup> However, she expressed a negative view of the female savant. She explained that she always tried to avoid 'pedantry or conceit' in conversation, that is, to not show off too much excessive learning.<sup>34</sup> 'Learned ladies...(had) not medium in their agreeableness in general. Literature was anything but desirable if it interfered with any of the kindred charities of domestic life'.<sup>35</sup> As was often the case, Lister's expressed opinions were at odds with her own behaviour and vision of herself. She recorded her training in Greek and Latin as well her reading of the Classics. Jill Liddington has portrayed her as a bluestocking.<sup>36</sup> While it might be tempting to argue that Lister was assuming a male gender-role of learnedness, book collecting and studiousness due to her 'sexual orientation', this simplistic assumption would ignore the wealth of evidence of well-read ladies in the eighteenth century, particularly the mid- to late eighteenth century circle of bluestockings discussed in a previous chapter.

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<sup>31</sup> A. Rowanchild, "'Everything done for effect": georgic, gothic and picturesque in Anne Lister's self-production', *Women's Writing*, 7 (2000), pp. 89-104, p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> The Gothic style was also fashionable in the nineteenth century.

<sup>33</sup> See discussion of education in Ideal Reader chapter.

<sup>34</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 238, 01 Mar. 1823.

<sup>35</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 238, 01 Mar. 1823.

<sup>36</sup> J. Liddington, 'Anne Lister of Shibden Hall, Halifax (1791-1840): her diaries and the historians', *History Workshop*, 35 (Spring, 1993), pp. 45-77, p. 57.

There is no question that books were part of Lister's conception of herself as a special, unique individual. She used this sense of individuality to justify why her sexual preferences differed to the social norm. She said of a dressmaker in London, 'Somehow told her of spending all my money in books & I think she understands me to be a character'.<sup>37</sup> A 'character' may have been more likely to diverge from normative behavioural practices. That buying books made Lister into this 'character' suggests how much she formulated her individual identity through print consumption and reading. She greatly admired Rousseau as a Romance writer. She used his work to justify her special status. When someone slighted she and Marianna she wrote in her diary, 'I said I cared not. Would never bite my own nose off. If we wanted the rooms, we would have them if we could, repeating my maxim from Rousseau's Confessions, 'Un simple mortel ne peut offenser mon âme [A mere mortal cannot offend my soul]'.<sup>38</sup> Anna Clark argues that Lister saw herself as an individual and of a singular nature, unique in the world.<sup>39</sup> Clark suggests that reading Rousseau against the grain was integral to Lister's sense of identity as an individual. Lister saw herself as an intellectual superior to others. 'Without some intellectual superiority over the common mass of those I meet with, what am I? Pejus quam nihil [A thing worse than nothing]'.<sup>40</sup> Her education and reading were fundamental parts of her identity used by Lister to justify her special status.

### **Authorial Aspirations**

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<sup>37</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 223, 01 Oct. 1822.

<sup>38</sup> Marianna Lawton, née Belcombe, was a long-term love of Lister's. She was married to Charles Lawton. The French quote comes from Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 132, 22 Sept. 1825.

<sup>39</sup> Clark, 'Lesbian identity', p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Whitbread *Priest*, p. 133, 23 Sept. 1825.



Lister had ambitions of becoming a published author. Harriet Guest has argued that women writers in the latter part of the eighteenth century were able to conceive of themselves as political subjects.<sup>41</sup> It is reasonable to say that Lister's hopes of publication linked to a yearning for public esteem and perhaps a legacy. She considered writing a book on antiquities after reading an abridgement of Joseph Spence's *Polymetis*.<sup>42</sup> She said she 'must write something', suggesting a need to make a wider name for herself beyond her provincial surroundings. She was always concerned with elevating her position socially and mixing with the 'right' sort of people. Her diary contains many complaints of the uncivilised nature of her Halifax companions (her father, in particular, troubled her by his undignified behaviour). Aspiring to authorship was another plan she had for raising her position socially.

Lister's opinions of women authors were complicated, much like her opinion on 'learned ladies' in general. By the early nineteenth century, the bluestockings had lost favour in the public eye.<sup>43</sup> Essayist Thomas de Quincey noted contemporary usage of the term as reproach.<sup>44</sup> While Lister did not use the term 'bluestocking' explicitly, she said that she was 'not an admirer of learned ladies. They are not the sweet, interesting creatures I should love'.<sup>45</sup> While this comment relates to personal sexual attraction, it also suggests mainstream contemporary disdain for women who could be categorised as bluestockings. Yet, Lister wanted to publish a translated version of Pliny as well as a series of letters (a popular genre of the time). 'Thought I myself would fit

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<sup>41</sup> Guest, *Small change*.

<sup>42</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 147, 04 Mar. 1821. Spence's *Polymetis* was published in 1747 as an illustrated folio. Spence intended it to show the relationship between the work of Roman poets and ancient artists. Interestingly, Erasmus Darwin wrote that *Polymetis* was not suited to the education of a young lady as it was too 'difficult' and 'voluminous'. See Darwin, *Education*, p. 123.

<sup>43</sup> See pp. 184-185 of the Bluestocking Reader chapter for Thomas de Quincey's characterisation of the bluestockings.

<sup>44</sup> De Quincey, p. 373.

<sup>45</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 237, 28 Feb. 1823.

myself to translate Pliny & also that I would write an account of my acquaintance with M--, surely in a series of letters to a friend. Think of calling myself, 'Constant Durer', from the verb *dure*, to endure'.<sup>46</sup> The fact that she came up with a pseudonym for herself underlines her determination to achieve her goal of publication, as well as a desire to publicise her life in print. The nature of the pseudonym implies that she intended to persist in her literary goals, despite any obstacles.

Historians have characterised bluestocking authors as publicly acceptable because of their feminine virtuous exteriority.<sup>47</sup> Lister did not seem to judge herself according to this model. The pseudonym choice appears to have been more linked to feelings of stoicism and fortitude, suggestive of her stolid Anglicanism and Tory, conservative politics. Lister could be characterised as orthodox and traditional in many of her ideas about the world. She desired to elevate her family name, despite a decaying lineage, and to assert constancy over time. She aligned herself with the establishment and the rights of the propertied. The argument about feminine aloofness does not apply in this case, though that is not to say that Lister did not seek veneration through authorship, even if she never achieved publication. If we use Clare Barlow's definition of authorial identity, we could argue that Lister did achieve some success, if only through the 4 million-word diary she left behind.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the document's visibility today is an impressive legacy that most people from the past cannot boast. If diarists can claim recognition as authors, Lister certainly achieved her goal.

### **Women, Reading, Love and Sex**

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<sup>46</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 231, 16 Dec. 1822.

<sup>47</sup> See Philosophical Reader chapter, p. 151.

<sup>48</sup> See Barlow, 'Female writers', p. 16.

As suggested, Lister's views of women, authorship and learning conflicted. Like many of her contradictory opinions, she was critical of women like herself who partook in intellectual pursuits. When it came to a romantic partner, philosophy and learning were of secondary importance to a traditional domestic life. As a lover of women, she preferred romances with those who could not be considered 'bluestockings'. Miss Pickford, with whom she struck up a friendship and suspected of being another lover of women, did not suit her as a lover because she was too bookish and similar to herself.<sup>49</sup> Lister tended to be attracted to 'pretty girls' with whom she could flirt, and she implied that prettiness meant a non-intellectual. She did not seek a bluestocking for a companion.

Nevertheless, it was essential to Lister that the women she loved shared some of her literary tastes, as shared reading and a shared knowledge of literature formed one of the bases for most of her relationships. As Anna Clark has noted, Lister creatively read the Classics and the Romantic writers to form her identity.<sup>50</sup> Her lovers also had to recognise these interpretations. For example, shared, implicit understandings of the same books were indicators of one's sexual preference. Lister decided that Miss Pickford must be of the same persuasion as herself because she had 'read the Sixth Satyr of Juvenal. She...(understood) these matters well enough'.<sup>51</sup> Later, while Lister was living in Paris, classical learning served as another means for signalling love between women. A woman at the pension where Lister stayed for several months asked Anne, 'Êtes-vous Achilles?' This allusion to the story of Achilles who was dressed as girl and sent away to escape his fate of dying in the Battle of Troy was an acknowledgement by the

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<sup>49</sup> Lister said, 'I would rather have a pretty girl to flirt with. She is clever for a lady, but her style of manner & character do not naturally suit me. She is not lovable'. Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 247, 12 May 1823.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, 'Lesbian identity', p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 268, 26 July 1823.

questioner that she understood Lister's sexual persuasion.<sup>52</sup> Other inhabitants at the pension noted Lister's masculine manner, particularly in the way she conversed with Mrs Barlow, but polite conversation required the use of literary allusion to convey understanding. Although Lister was dismissive of learning in women, or at least the contemporary faux pas of blatant intellectualism, she and her friends relied on books and reading as a means of indicating same-sex love. In particular, the books and references to classical and romantic literature, served as a way to communicate sexuality and to gauge a lover's interest.

Books were necessary for Lister to create a conception of herself as a lover of woman in a society that did not discuss same-sex love, which was relegated to fringe groups and cultures such as the molly houses for men. Although she lived away from a major metropolitan city, making it especially hard to find models of emulation, Lister did see similarities between herself and the famous 'Ladies of Llangollen', particularly known for their literary acumen. They were two Irish women who had fled arranged marriages to live a peaceful life together in Wales. Lady Eleanor and Miss Ponsonby were famous for being well-read. The literary minds of the day admired and respected the couple. Lister visited them on one occasion and their library and reading habits impressed her. She wrote of the many books read and enjoyed together by the two women. No doubt, she took their keenness for reading to be one indicator of same-sex love. She found their home where they were 'always reading' at Plas Newydd to be 'an interesting place'.<sup>53</sup> It 'excited in (*Lister*)...for a variety of circumstances, a sort of peculiar interest tinged with melancholy... (*and it*) conjured up many a vision of...hope'<sup>54</sup>. This comment implies that the peaceful life of books, shared reading between female lovers surrounded by beauty and good taste was

<sup>52</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 26, 12 Oct. 1824.

<sup>53</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 196, 14 July 1822.

<sup>54</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 196, 14 July 1822.

an aspiration of Lister's. She saw the Ladies of Llangollen as kindred spirits to herself, with books as signifiers of same-sex love. She said that Miss Ponsonby was 'mild and gentle, certainly not masculine, and yet there was a *je-ne-sais-quoi* which was striking'.<sup>55</sup> She would have not commented on the '*je-ne-sais-quoi*' had she not seen similarities between herself and the pair at Plas Newydd. Lister's mention of their books and reading habits suggests that Lister sensed that the two women shared her dedication to a literary lifestyle as well as her sexual persuasions.

Besides the examples of classical allusion already discussed, Lister used the work of early nineteenth-century Romantic writers as a code to communicate taboo subjects. She asked Miss Ponsonby if she had read *Don Juan*, by Lord Byron, as if she were trying to determine the nature of Miss Ponsonby's and Lady Eleanor's relationship.<sup>56</sup> Lister was a great fan of Byron. Upon his death in 1824 she wrote, 'Yet "he is gone & forever!" The greatest poet of the age! And I am sorry'.<sup>57</sup> Lister was attracted to Byron's themes of forbidden love and tested the waters with women by mentioning or lending books by Byron.<sup>58</sup> She considered giving Byron's tale of chivalric pilgrimage, *Childe Harold*, to the young Miss Browne as a gift.<sup>59</sup> Scholars have argued that this work was the first literary example of the 'Byronic hero' who was aristocratic and sexually frustrated in his own country. Readers have read the work as a 'rough draft' for '*Don Juan*'s more subversive, gay narrator'.<sup>60</sup> Lister wrote that Miss Browne: 'Inquired for the 5<sup>th</sup> canto of 'Childe Harold'. It is not in the library & I have been thinking ever since (for somehow or other, this girl haunts my thoughts like some genius of fairy lore)

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<sup>55</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 202, 23 July 1822.

<sup>56</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 203, 23 July 1822.

<sup>57</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 344, 19 May 1824.

<sup>58</sup> Clark, 'Lesbian identity', p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> See Philosopher Reader chapter on the gift of the book as a means of transmitting an idea, p. 154.

<sup>60</sup> J.D. Gross, *Byron: the erotic liberal* (Oxford, 2001) p.148.

how to get it & offer it for her reading'.<sup>61</sup> The desire to obtain the story of Childe Harold, a seducer of women, and lend it to Miss Browne was Lister's way of communicating a forbidden passion to awaken Miss Browne to the possibilities of a love affair with Lister.

Lister could not discuss love affairs openly with someone who was not yet an intimate friend (such as Marianna Lawton or Isabella Norcliffe) and therefore books were necessary for conveying messages. In France, Mrs Barlow gave Lister a book on lesbians as an acknowledgement of Anne's sexual interest in her:

She then showed me the little book the gentleman had left here for her, 'Voyage a Plombieres', p. 126, where is the story of one woman intriguing with another. She has lent me the book...She gives me to understand she would live with me and is sure I could love very deeply.<sup>62</sup>

This is an obvious example of the exchange of books and the sharing of reading to indicate sexual interest and attraction. Mrs Barlow and Lister even used the Bible as a reference to talk about same-sex love, specifically mentioning the book of Romans and discussing sodomy and sex between two men. In this discussion with Mrs Barlow, Lister is shamelessly and characteristically duplicitous, admitting she would like to learn about sex between women, even though it would be of no use to her because she had 'no inclination'.<sup>63</sup> At this point, Mrs Barlow presented her with the book just mentioned. The book as gift, as already discussed in the chapter on Thomas Hollis was a means of communication and persuasion. As Susan Staves has suggested, a gift encouraged the recipient to, 'adopt and develop an ideological or literary

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<sup>61</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 42, 12 May 1818.

<sup>62</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 33, 15 Oct. 1824.

<sup>63</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 33, 15 Oct. 1824.

perspective that the lender aimed to promote'.<sup>64</sup> The exchange between Mrs Barlow and Lister reveals how books as gifts facilitated discussion and served as cultural references. Books, even the Bible, served as conduits for communication, especially necessary when discussing the sensitive subject of sex, particularly same-sex attraction. In this instance, the Bible also served as a sort of textbook for terminology and practice of sexual behaviour.

In other relationships with women, Lister was careful not to give anything away too soon and too openly. With Miss Pickford she flatly denied any knowledge of sex between two women (a similar deception to the one used on Mrs Barlow in Paris) besides what she read about in books and she reminded Miss Pickford how important it was to be guarded in conversation.<sup>65</sup> This recommended caution highlights the requirements of social convention. The need for discretion necessitated a reliance on neutral cultural sources that could be referenced obliquely because the relationships were sexual and between two women.<sup>66</sup>

In Lister's case, caution was particularly vital. She was already notable for her gentlemanlike appearance and behaviour (though it could be argued that her class protected her from too much neighbourly scrutiny). When she strode too far outside of social conventions in her manner and in her appearance, she upset her primary lover, Marianna Lawton. At these times, she would have been less objectionable to Lawton if she had hidden her feelings in discrete references to literature and coded letters. Communicating an unacknowledged sexuality through the language of the classics and allusions to literature was a deliberate use of reading employed by Lister to convey forbidden intentions and feelings.

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<sup>64</sup> J. Batchelor and C. Kaplan, *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 203.

<sup>65</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 238, 1 Mar. 1823.

<sup>66</sup> The only time when abstract reference was not necessary was in private with someone who was already an intimate of Lister's.

Reading was as a common habit or routine for lovers to share. This routine could bring lovers closer together emotionally, even if they were separated physically. For example, Lister and Lawton agreed to read the same book of the New Testament at the same time each day as way to feel connected while apart. This served as a form of literary communion for the two women. In September 1821 Lister wrote in her diary:

Settled that M--& I are, every morning at 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> , to read a chapter in the new testament & asked her to begin next Monday. She first proposed at Newcastle our reading something, the same thing & at the same hour every day--& we have agreed on the new testament and the hour named.<sup>67</sup>

In the same way that letter writing acted as a strong emotional tie for women separated by distance, reading in common created possibilities for bonding. Anne Lister read the Bible and thought of her lover doing the same thing at the same time, enabling an intimacy despite separation. By forcing their minds to focus on the same thing, they could simulate a togetherness that was physically impossible at that moment. In this sense, books could be portals for virtual interconnection. Simultaneous reading was an affirmation of love.

Reading aloud with lovers was another form of literary communion. Lister wrote of being 'on the amoroso' with M— then reading aloud from Sir Walter Scott's novel, *The Monastery*, in April of 1820.<sup>68</sup> On the last day of the year in 1824, she wrote of reading aloud and feeling 'comfortable' with Mrs Barlow in Paris. 'Tea between 9 and 10. I read aloud a little of "The Pleasures of Hope". Mrs Barlow sat hemming one end of a tablecloth and we

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<sup>67</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 165, 10 Sept. 1821.

<sup>68</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 120, 10 Apr. 1820.



were very cozy and comfortable'.<sup>69</sup> Like reading at a specific time while separated, this practice of reading aloud to one another while together acted as a bond between women. It was a way of communicating, but more importantly of enjoying each other's company through a shared activity. Reading aloud has been shown to have been a common practice of readers in the eighteenth century. Lister also read aloud prayers at home on Sunday and French with her French tutor, to work on her accent in Paris. Reading aloud was common educational practice in the period. It was not only a method of learning but also a sociable activity enjoyed at gatherings in the home. Anna Larpent wrote of reading aloud with her family. Lister is particularly notable for reading aloud with lovers.

Lister also read aloud to herself when she was alone. 'From 7-40 to 9 ½, reading aloud to myself from p. 42 to 50 (*very* carefully) vol. I, Rousseau's Confessions. I read this work so attentively for the style's sake. Besides this, it is a singularly unique display of character'.<sup>70</sup> In this instance, the reading aloud was not to bond with lovers, but rather educational, to learn verbal style. Lister is the only one of the diarists studied in this thesis to have mentioned reading aloud while alone. It is no doubt that other readers engaged in this practice, as it was considered a skill to be mastered, as well as reading silently or writing.

### **Useful Knowledge**

Reading provided Anne Lister with a means of gaining knowledge of estate-management that she would need when she would inherit Shibden Hall from her uncle. She read newspapers and periodicals in the morning to learn about local, national and

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<sup>69</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 67, 31 Dec. 1824.

<sup>70</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 103, 15 May 1825.

international news. In 1827, she 'read the morning paper...observed the Times review much against the new national bank scheme'.<sup>71</sup> She also read about scientific matters, including geology and horticulture. In 1823, she wrote that she, 'rd 124 to 153 end of "The experimental Farmer: being strictures on varied branches of husbandry & agriculture..." So good obs in this work, ye bet for being so small—no waste of wds.—Buy it'.<sup>72</sup> She read a work on topographical history, a gardening dictionary as well as attended lectures on mineralogy.<sup>73</sup> Such reading material allowed her to be a proactive head of the estate and knowledgeable about farming, mining and legal matters. This was reading for action, goal orientated and giving rise to something else.<sup>74</sup>

### **Social Pressure**

Lister espoused views about the unsuitability of some books.<sup>75</sup> She tried to avoid 'the fearful rousing, of novel reading. I must not indulge in it', though she did indeed read plenty of novels.<sup>76</sup> She 'agreed that Lady Caroline Lambe's [sic] novel, *Glenarvon*...(was) very talented but a very dangerous sort of book'.<sup>77</sup> She did not explain why she considered it 'dangerous' but it could be that its scandalous content, a kiss-and-tell account of Lambe's affair with Lord Byron, was considered too salacious for polite society. Lister often spoke to friends about which books were considered

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<sup>71</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH: 7/ML/E/10, 14 Nov. 1827.

<sup>72</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH: 7/ML/E/6, 8 July 1823.

<sup>73</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/11, 28 Sept. 1828 ('Rd & skimmed thro' ye 2 last nos for July (Mag?) wch took me till 2 ½ --vid an excellent essay on Eng Topographical Histry—fr Hunters hist—') and 4 Dec. 1828 ('Readg Millers gardn dicty'). Also, SH 7/ML/E/12, 14 May 1829 ('Bronguiants mineralogical are mond, wed & fri at 9am').

<sup>74</sup> Jardine and Grafton, 'Studied for action', p. 30.

<sup>75</sup> Historians have argued that any reading by women, no matter what the genre, was a 'dangerous recreation' in the long eighteenth century, including in the 1830s, as already discussed in this thesis. The theme of unacceptable books ran throughout eighteenth century and early nineteenth century commentary on reading, especially reading by women. See Introduction chapter and Ideal Reader chapter.

<sup>76</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 146, 14 Feb. 1821.

<sup>77</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 296, 16 Sept. 1823.

‘improper’ and which not.<sup>78</sup> On another occasion, Lister spoke to a friend in Paris about certain books being ‘a little free’, implying they were morally questionable.

Speaking of different books, asked Mme Galvani if she had ever read the ‘Basia’ of Johannes Secundus. Yes, she has the work & will lend it to me, merely observing, when I said was it not a curious sort of thing, that it was a little free but so were all the poets. Mme Galvani had read the Latin historians & merely observed, when I asked what she thought of Suetonius, that he was a little free but so were all historians. Perhaps it was not fit for quite young girls to read but women come to years of discretion might read anything of the kind.<sup>79</sup>

It is interesting to note the hint at an age requirement, that is, the implication that young women should not see certain books, whereas older women, perhaps with more wisdom and maturity, being unlikely to be corrupted or misled, should have no restrictions in reading material. This view echoed the opinions on ‘ideal reading’, those that placed age restrictions on acceptable reading.<sup>80</sup> Educators repeated that one should read with ‘discretion’. They discouraged haphazard reading and recommended supervision for young women readers. It is obvious from Lister’s accounts of conversations with neighbours and friends, that others were interested in her reading choices. In these conversations, Lister held back due to the contemporary expectations of correct reading. Like her hesitance to reveal to Miss Pickford her history of loving women, she did not disclose

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<sup>78</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 151, 30 Mar. 1821. Lister wrote: ‘Long talk about what books were improper and what not. They mentioned *Lallah Rookh* & their not finding it out. I said I thought it as much so as Little’s poems, or even the two first cantos of *Don Juan*...’

<sup>79</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 25, 09 Oct. 1824.

<sup>80</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter.

everything about her reading. When a Mrs Waterhouse asked her if she had read *Don Juan*, she did not admit it.<sup>81</sup> We find that Lister had to give off the impression of reading within certain limits and not overstepping dictates of social convention by reading books considered too 'masculine' or too 'free'.

On other occasions, Lister's private reading habits were not restricted by social conventions. As already suggested, she sought out material to read creatively in which to find examples of same-sex love. Furthermore, social norms did not restrict her classical reading as she spent hours teaching herself Greek and Latin. Philosophy fascinated Lister and this was another subject considered by some to be outside a woman's 'sphere'.<sup>82</sup>

From Hope, went to the library & staid about an hour reading...in the monthly magazine of July 1820 remarkable praise of the life & writings of the celebrated German philosopher & professor, Kant, born, I think, in 1723, died 1804. Turned to the article again. I must know more about this extraordinary man & his works by & by.<sup>83</sup>

Lister's reading range was so wide, that there is no indication that she considered herself constrained at all by polite conventions or any such notions of feminine texts. This lends further support to the argument that women and men were not bound to gendered boundaries necessarily when it came to reading choice, even if some, like Lister, may have tried to keep such activities hidden from the public view.

There was a divergence between public acceptability and private practice. On one occasion, Lister hid a library book from her aunt, presumably because it would be considered inappropriate reading.

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<sup>81</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 131, 25 July 1820.

<sup>82</sup> See Ideal Reader chapter on philosophy restrictions, p. 93-94.

<sup>83</sup> Whitbread, *Heart*, p. 147, 20 Feb. 1821.

Went back at 5 to ye liby makg as an excuse of seeing whether they'd any books yet. Wantd renewg & got...Thomson's Annals of philos wch by ye way, yt my at. (*aunt?*) ot not see me carryg it home, I stuffd it in my pocket.<sup>84</sup>

Lister's concern about concealing certain books from others demonstrates external pressure on her to carry out acceptable reading habits. Collective moral opinion delineated the boundaries of acceptable reading practices, especially for women. However, readers did not conform to rules on acceptability in practice. The fact that Lister had such freedom privately demonstrates once again that literate women were able to read widely and flexibly, assuming they had access to books.

Of course, the divergence between outward display and personal behaviour makes the uncovering of reading choice by men and women difficult to discover where there are not personal accounts available in diaries. Even in diaries, readers might have hesitated to reveal such habits for fear of discovery. Most diarists did not record 'illicit' behaviour openly in their records.<sup>85</sup> Sometimes moralists declared that *Tom Jones* and the Richardson novels were unsuitable reading young women. Readers may have kept such books off the record.

Nonetheless, it is unreasonable to suggest that if Anna Larpent, Elizabeth Montagu or Catherine Talbot desired to read something considered socially taboo, there was nothing to stop them. If Larpent chose to avoid such books because of 'loose expressions' or other inappropriate content or language, that would have been her personal decision, not an external

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<sup>84</sup> WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/2, 12 May 1818.

<sup>85</sup> Lister coded the 'illicit' parts of her diary. Edmund Harrold, as discussed in the occupational reader chapter, was very open about his sex life with his wife. However, he did not represent it as 'illicit', but instead part of husbandly duty in a Christian marriage.

restriction. Social mores indeed could be persuasive, but ultimately, the reader made the choice, if she had access to the books. Whether the act of reading such material might have been secretive on occasion, freedom of reading choice existed. There has been no indication from the diaries and letters examined here that women were ever prevented from reading particular books because of social pressure. While Jacqueline Pearson's arguments about the 'danger' of reading for women can be found in prescriptive literature, they do not hold true in the real lives of women readers, who chose to read flexibly and widely.

## **Conclusion**

Lister's reading of 'masculine' texts and her accumulation of books as a public display of wealth reflect the symbolic power of learning and book ownership in a world in which education brought prestige. Classical learning for men did indeed represent status. Lister tapped into this norm in an attempt to gain social standing within her community, as well as to identify herself as a learned member of the gentry aspiring to an aristocratic heritage. She aimed for erudition. Lister's reading contrasted with some of the occupational men discussed who, while recognising the power of deep learning, also realised the economic and social benefits associated with improving their careers through the knowledge acquisition available in books.

Perhaps Anne Lister shared more in common with Thomas Hollis who also lived in a self-created world of ideals based on specific readings of particular books. Even though Hollis was a Whig and Lister a Tory, both looked to the past for models for the future. For Hollis, the canonical texts of the seventeenth century republican tradition outfitted his notions of civic duty, a future world based on lofty notions of liberty. Lister looked into her own family heritage to find a well-established ancestry. While her

politics were orthodox and conservative, she identified Romance heroes who lived passionately outside social norms. She was a propertied Tory who nonetheless lived an unorthodox life of love affairs with women. For both Hollis and Lister, the reading of the past and their interaction with books were crucial to their visions of themselves and their society around them. Such reading provided alternative scripts to social and gender norms of the day.

Anne Lister was very critical of 'learned ladies', even though her reading of the classics was similar to that of the bluestockings. In the early nineteenth century, public favour had turned away from venerating the bluestockings, and instead, many social commentators detracted their achievements. Lister was a product of her times. Yet, she aspired to publish. In her own life, she did indeed share the aspirations of Elizabeth Montagu, even though Lister never achieved conventional authorship. Lister certainly shared the bluestockings' dedication to reading, and thus stood on common ground with Talbot, Montagu and Larpent. All four used their books for personal goals, including self-education and self-improvement. They read for action. Results came from their print consumption, whether it was publication, intellectual discernment or communication with lovers.

Lister did not speak of virtue in the way that Larpent did, and certainly not as Hollis did. This suggests the concept did not carry the same purchase for Lister, at least not where it related to the life of the mind and education. Lister's devotion to Anglicanism was stoic, and, according to her diary, she did not spend much time reflecting on her religion. She mentioned the bible in an episode in which she and Mrs Barlow searched for contraception methods within its pages. Lister traded a bible for a dictionary of natural history at Todd's bookshop.<sup>86</sup> In another instance, she agreed to read the New Testament with Marianna at

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<sup>86</sup> Whitbread, *Priest*, p. 32-33, 15 Oct. 1824 and WYAS, Lister, SH 7/ML/E/1, 18 Dec. 1817.

an allocated time. Lister's identity related to status, intellectualism and a love for women. Her reading habits fuelled these preoccupations rather than strivings for virtue, whether of civic humanism or religious good.

Clearly, Anne Lister's reading habits and routines were critical to all aspects of her intellectual, social and emotional world. Not only were books and literary language necessary for communication in love affairs and for her sense of sexual identity, but they were key to her social and economic position as well. They justified her special position in the world. Her freedom as heir to an estate and her social standing in her community meant she had great access to education and books. Lister dedicated herself to intellectual self-betterment. She also used diary-writing, extensive reading and self-teaching as methods to occupy her mind and keep her from idleness or 'moody thoughts'. Reading was fundamental to most aspects of Lister's life.

Anne Lister's diary is a critical source for the study of reading in the early nineteenth century because it shows that, despite the polite conventions and 'rules' of acceptable reading practice for women, even those espoused by Lister herself, Lister rarely followed her own pronouncements about acceptability. This was the case with her reading as well as with her love affairs. The diary also demonstrates how accessible books were to frequenters of libraries, as well as how literature provided conversation material and cultural references for sociability. It is crucial to analyse the diary with an eye to more than just lesbianism. The source is extremely rich with many aspects of a genteel woman's life in the early nineteenth century, not least of which detailing the habits of an inexhaustible and total reader.



## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion**

‘A writer only begins a book. A reader finishes it.’  
–Samuel Johnson

This thesis has described encounters with a number of men and women—learned and aspirational; wealthy and thrifty; famous and diligent; those driven by politics and those driven by identity. The exploration of their lives through various remnants of their reading and writing has uncovered links between the impulses of gender, self and culture. Readers’ behaviours and interpretations have been contextualised around contemporary notions of masculinity and femininity, individual action and subjectivity and eighteenth-century cultural influences of education, religion and sociability. Considering a long view of the period, the thesis has highlighted continuity in the potential of books to provide readers with important opportunities, despite the warnings of advice literature. Goals for reading varied throughout the period, but the fact that the men and women studied considered reading to be a personal and social asset remained constant.

All the readers in this thesis based their goals for active reading around individual aspirations. Readers consumed texts thoroughly or less thoroughly according to their own preferences and requirements. In some cases, readers considered the authors’ points of view entirely, fully digesting each work. In other instances, readers read more superficially as it suited them. Some books were considered worthy of reading repeatedly (intensively), while others were worthy only of a single read (extensively).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction chapter, p. 30, for the differentiation between extensive reading and intensive reading.

Eighteenth-century readers practised both modes of textual consumption.

According to commentators, pedantry was an impolite behavioural trait acquired, in part, through incorrect reading habits. Advice literature recommended its avoidance. One definition of pedantry was the total immersion in 'dusty' classics, irrelevant to the real world. The men studied here, with the exception of Hollis, engaged in the full spectrum of reading including polite learning, acquiring skills, worldly knowledge, and classical, 'deep' learning, and none were accused of pedantry, according to their accounts. The research did uncover evidence of criticism of female pedantry, however. Catherine Talbot was accused of being a 'Phoebe Clinkett', the disparaging comment about a fictional female poet. In the early nineteenth century, Anne Lister maligned 'learned ladies' at a time when the popularity of the bluestockings had severely diminished. Thus, for the readers studied, the critique of pedantry among women existed more than it did for men, even though, as mentioned, commentators complained about the trait in men as well.

The lives studied can be interpreted using gender as a category for analysis. Reading, whether as a tool of education, religion, sociability, politeness, authorship, social status, economic steadfastness, propaganda, friendship, familial unity, occupation or love, could affirm and challenge gender norms, as well as provide alternative scripts. The reading of the middling men allowed them to fulfil ideals of masculinity within their careers, social lives and family lives. Reading enabled and enacted Anna Larpent's fulfillment of motherly duties related to her children's education. However, Larpent's reading was not a case of 'confined' domestication. Her literary reviews within her diary were bold critiques of all genres, including what John Brewer has

considered 'masculine texts'. Thomas Hollis' reading of seventeenth-century republican books and philosophy meant that he could interpret civic engagement through a lens of an older form of masculine *Virtù*, justifying his 'private' life, outside eighteenth-century expectations for male public office-holding. His reading of these treatises and the distribution of such tracts (as well as images and objects), demonstrates reading's provision of empowered, interpretive gender identity. The reading of bluestockings gave them access to public, intellectual debate as well as forums for authorship in a market and culture that could be unsympathetic to women of learning. Anne Lister used her books as tools to communicate with lovers and facilitate sexual relationships with women, an endeavour that could not be discussed openly. Reading could reinforce as well as provide opportunities for negotiation of gender expectations.

The men studied faced fewer prescriptions based on gender than women, but they still had to actively negotiate terms of propriety in relation to textual consumption. Matthew Flinders embraced ideals of middling male citizenship in his concern to read law books. Dudley Ryder was particularly keen to demonstrate polite learning and proper conversation, as prescribed by conduct literature for men. John Cannon represented his career as an example of masculine patriotic duty aligned with learned commercialism. Such accounts detail men engaging with and applying masculine prescriptions. In other accounts, accepting social convention was more problematic. Thomas Hollis believed that his obsessive devotion to the 'plan' appeared 'ridiculous to lookers on', revealing a self-awareness about public opinion and its 'pressure' upon his 'spirits'. Critics denounced Hollis as a 'sad and poor soul' and historians have argued that this was due to his failure to live up to contemporary notions of masculine office-holding. While Flinders' diary reveals a

man embracing expected standards of masculinity, Hollis' diary shows the author suffering under the weight of social convention. Thus, within the group of men studied, some men embraced and enacted contemporary notions of masculinity, while others, particularly Hollis, rejected and struggled with social pressure.

Reading as a sociable activity was highly characteristic of the eighteenth century. The readers studied were embedded in a variety of interpersonal relations, which included print networks, literary conversation circles, societies and familial groups. For the middling men, book societies and networks based on book trading kept readers engaged with a community of readers who keenly discussed the latest textual content. Thomas Hollis had an international network of like-minded readers within which his books moved. Conversations about publication and book content flourished in such circles. Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Montagu engaged in conversation parties often based around literary topics, and even Anna Larpent spoke of attending conversation 'circles'. Anne Lister's relationships with women relied upon shared reading. For all the men and women, reading aloud was part of the daily routine, whether it was John Marsh reading to his family, Talbot reading Homer in a group whilst staying at Wrest Park or Larpent listening to her sons or husband read at home. Lister and her lovers agreed to read books at similar times whilst separated in order to reinforce romantic bonds. Furthermore, conversation and reading were intimately married in this period. Shared reading in the eighteenth century, demonstrates that there was not just an individual relationship between reader and text. Public readings, such as sermons, for example, suggest that the practice of print consumption in the period transcended supposed boundaries between the individual and a social group. Conversations about literary content had an impact beyond the domestic realm, particularly in the case of

Hollis and the bluestockings, whose reading shaped ideas on citizenship and education. Such overlays represented an interdependent relationship between the reader as a 'self' and his or her wider culture.

Cultural expectations expressed reading's influence on correct habits of virtue and this rhetorical category did feature prominently in readers' own accounts. Reading had a gendered dimension as readers like Hollis sought out historical instances of classical civic *Virtù* within his favourite texts. Anna Larpent's vision of virtue, on the other hand, related to her own spiritual steadiness and devotion to her children and husband. Historians have noted how the bluestockings, like Elizabeth Montagu, embraced national virtue as public women. Talbot and Montagu enjoyed classical texts of Horace, Cicero and Cato, as well as Hollis' favourite, Milton. Excise officer, John Cannon, spoke of reading as a 'light to guide us to virtue'. Rather than understanding the term as a classical notion that entailed a duty to the state, Cannon praised learned artisans as useful men whose commercial efforts would benefit the nation. Thus, virtue was still a patriotic ideal, but practical knowledge of a trade was most valued. Overall, the concept of virtue was aligned closely to one's reading practices in the eighteenth century, even while it had a diversity of meanings, sometimes gendered in nature.

Linked to virtue, religious devotion was heavily reliant on personal and social print consumption amongst the middling and gentry classes. Other than Hollis and Neville who were rational dissenters, and Ryder, who came from a dissenting background, all the readers studied were Anglican. For most, the reading of the scriptures, devotionals, sermons and other religious tracts was a central part of their daily print consumption. Pious reading routinely took place upon waking as well as before going to bed.

Further devotional reading occurred on Sundays. Religious textual consumption was both a personal and a social activity, incorporated into an individual's routine as well as familial and neighbourly society. Thus, religious texts were usually consumed in accordance with specific daily routines.

The readers analysed in this thesis interrogated their religious texts as they applied them to their own worldviews and habits. Print piety was an exercise in reason and study. Larpent, for example, considered the 'arguments' of theological authors. While prescriptive literature advised readers, especially women, to avoid 'controversial' theology, the readers studied here did not admit to abiding by such recommendations. Ryder considered how religious philosophy could be reconciled with his love for polite living amid worldly temptation. Contextual religious reading for both Anglicans and dissenters was innately intellectual. Neville's attendance of Caleb Fleming's sermons was often followed by conversation surrounding theology, as well as close readings of the Bible. The dissenters and Anglicans studied here did not take religious beliefs for granted, but rather questioned and studied them through the medium of print.

Readers engaged with their books as objects of significance that not only carried important contextual meanings, but also material relevance. The middling men studied acquired books as symbols of public worth, keen to build personal collections to display. Thomas Hollis understood the value of emblems and bindings within his commissioned books, intending that such imagery would direct readers to the correct political interpretations. Hollis realised that aesthetics mattered in the book trade, and that buyers would buy attractive texts. Printers producing books in a market had to consider presentation in order to encourage sales. Anna Larpent proves that readers concerned

themselves with presentation and format in her comments on 'elegance' related to engravings and printing. Such details pleased readers and influenced the reading experience and purchase decisions. Historians should not neglect to consider the materiality of the book in the eighteenth century. As specific objects within specific environments, books affected reading in distinctive ways.

Reading routines varied for readers. Many wrote of reading in the morning and evening. Morning reading was usually an individual exercise, and evening reading more likely to be social. Some readers, such as Ryder and Lister, planned elaborate reading regimes in which they dedicated most hours of the day to the consumption of print. These efforts were undertaken in the name of self-improvement and learning. The goal-setting of regular reading was characteristic of the diary writers whose schedules were packed with varied genres chosen for specific purposes. Ryder wrote of reading 'polite authors' before bed because they were most likely to keep him awake, meaning they were light and entertaining. He dedicated his mornings to his career, the reading of law, while he read 'Roman authors' after dinner until the evening. Many readers considered the morning to be the time for the 'business of the day', for both men and women, whereas the evening was a more social and enjoyable time for print. Talbot wrote of shared reading of Homer in the evenings. Montagu spoke of listening to 'Milton, Shakespear [sic] or some Entertaining book every Evening'. Lister's reading routine was the most erratic, revealing her to have read at all times throughout the day. These findings suggest that while consistent patterns existed amongst some readers studied, particularly for morning and bedtime reading, and pious reading on Sundays, readers could consume print throughout the day in a variety of settings.

The readers studied did the majority of their reading indoors. Talbot spoke of reading in the library whilst staying at Wrest Park, as well as in the closet and in the bedroom. The private house library of the gentry in this period was becoming a more sociable environment where reading aloud took place. Lister read at her desk while at home, and installed bookshelves in her closet. The many mentions of reading before breakfast suggest either reading in bed, or reading within a bedroom at a desk or in a chair. However, reading was becoming more portable in this period, as well, and there were opportunities for reading in a variety of environments beyond the home. Neville and Hollis read newspapers whilst in coffee shops. Lister read whilst walking out on her terrace, going down into town, and curling her hair. Lister also read in bookshops as she decided whether to buy books. Reading whilst travelling was a feature of the eighteenth-century communication revolution; readers like Marsh read to pass the time on long carriage journeys. Lister read socially and individually whilst staying in a pension in Paris. Thus, this thesis demonstrates the prevalence of reading in traditional settings within the home, as well as reading in a diversity of outside spaces further afield.

When it came to accessing books, the men and women examined here bought books from bookshops, auctions, and book traders, borrowed from circulating libraries, private libraries and friends, and subscribed to books and journals as individuals and as societies. They all mixed the reading of books with the reading of newspapers and periodicals. Readers combined methods for acquiring textual material, and most did not rely on a single source of books.

Not compliant with the strict gendering of genre recommendations explored in the Ideal Reader chapter, all the



readers chose their genres freely according to taste and their goals for reading. Both men and women read novels for enjoyment, distraction and interest. They read historical subjects widely, a topic that provided understanding of the world and its processes, as well as pleasure. Both the men and women studied here enjoyed classical learning if it suited them. The readers digested publications of piety and biblical study. In general, a wide variety of genres have been revealed through the examination of readers' diaries, once again emphasising that these men and women read purposefully based on choice, not prescription.

This thesis has revealed findings about eighteenth-century diary-keeping. Diaries aided readers. In some cases, such as Larpent, the diary acted as a commonplace book, in which she copied extracts from books. Larpent also wrote lists of books read or books she wanted to purchase. Lister used her diary to copy title pages from books, as well as list books bought and index similies she found in her reading. Lister also used a system of symbols within her diary that corresponded to marginalia she used in her books, reminding her of important passages and where she could find further commentary. Reading and writing acted symbiotically in such instances. For Larpent especially, the diary acted as a forum to express literary commentary. Her 'book' contains hundreds of critiques and opinions on her reading, making the manuscript an unpublished, uncirculated work of literary criticism. Like her husband working as examiner of plays, Larpent worked as a cultural examiner expressing judgements on the books she consumed within the pages of her diary. Diaries complemented readers' literary habits.

The question of audience is an important one in the consideration of the diaries. Larpent wrote her diary with the hope that her husband would read it and that her sons would read it as

an aid to their education. She did not write it for publication. Lister coded 'unacceptable' sections of her diary in order to prevent discovery by others. Cannon, on the other hand, had hopes for formal authorship of his 'chronicles'. He started his 'book' as an adult looking back on his childhood and youth. Eventually he began making daily entries. Before that point, the diary read as an autobiography. In this case, Cannon was working on a 'story' of his life, which he intended for a wide audience. He wrote several revisions, which he burnt, finally settling on the 'authorised' version copied into a folio volume bought for that purpose in 1740.<sup>2</sup> The audience for Larpent's diary and Cannon's diary differed.

Cannon's aim to share his story with a 'public' rather than family members influenced his approach to writing, particularly in his justifications of his actions, as well as his quest to place himself in a historical trajectory (he included a family tree and a story of his ancestors). As an autobiography, more than a daily account, we can understand Cannon's remarks on his reading differently to some of the other diaries, particularly because it was the only diary written with the expressed intention of publication. For example, he refers to his love of reading in his youth, and goes on to show how this reading shaped his life story. He called himself an 'author'.<sup>3</sup> His account is often grandiose, as he aligned himself with the 'holy penmen' of the Bible.<sup>4</sup> He spoke of making his own fortune through self-education and reading. Ultimately, his memoir is confirmation of his belief in the value of his life story for a wide audience. While its framing as a 'story' for the 'public' might suggest its unreliability as a source compared to the more daily recording of actions and thoughts of others

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<sup>2</sup> For further information on John Cannon's diary, see J. Money's introduction to the published edition. Money, *Cannon*.

<sup>3</sup> Money, *Cannon*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Money, *Cannon*, p. 5.

(particularly in the case of Flinders and Woodforde, who combined their diaries with daily financial account keeping), in fact, its use as a source in reading history is equally valid.<sup>5</sup> Even if time shaped his life-story as he looked back on his youth, the vision he had of himself and the role his reading played within that vision is a valuable insight into one man's engagement with books. He recorded his life as he understood it and how he wanted it to be understood by others. Moreover, those diaries which appeared to be daily accounts of happenings and events could still be clouded by concerns to record a particular 'self'. Additionally, diarists did not all write daily, sometimes going back and recording events a few days after they happened, or diaries may have been transcriptions from other sources of life writing.<sup>6</sup> All diaries were influenced to some degree by diarists' anticipation of audience, retrospective accounts and transcription processes, but this does not invalidate them as evidence of 'reading lives'.

Lister did not write her diary of 4 million words for a wider public. However, she did have aspirations of being a published author. She wanted to translate Pliny, as well as publish an account of her acquaintance with her primary lover, Marianne Lawton (née Belcombe), in a series of letters. Nevertheless, Lister's diary acted mainly as a daily tool to aid her energetic studies, structure and keep account of her time, offer an emotional outlet for her frustrations, as well as provide a secret forum (the coded section) to express her thoughts and feelings about her love affairs. The diary could be considered a more 'organic' ego-document than that of Cannon's, which was recopied and self-consciously self-edited. But again, no diary is truly 'organic',

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<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in the Introduction chapter, it has been noted that many of the diaries were not instantaneous transmissions of daily records, and were often filtered through multiple transcription processes. See Smyth, *Autobiography*, pp. 1-2, and my Introduction chapter, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Smyth, *Autobiography*.

meaning an exact transmission of thought onto paper, and all authors self-edit what they write. Authorial filters work like conversation, which is shaped by speakers' needs and desires to project particular 'selves' to a social group. But perhaps conversation is more moderated by social conventions than the expressions of an isolated author. The most important aspect of diarists' accounts for this project is that readers wrote about their lives as they understood them, as they wanted them to be recorded, in accordance with their particular uses of their diaries and reading.

For many of the men and women studied, the act of reading functioned as a method for managing daily feelings. Anna Larpent spoke of managing distress when she read to distract her from worries about family sickness. John Marsh also wrote of reading to occupy and distract himself during his own sickness. Dudley Ryder read to cope with boredom. Anne Lister read to cope with the turmoil of her romantic relationships. In all cases, diarists recorded that they used their reading to ameliorate an unpleasant state of mind, whether worry, sadness or boredom. Reading's construction as both an emotional and intellectual exercise meant that it had therapeutic qualities for its readers. Besides being a comfort and a support, it was also a source of enjoyment, as mentioned by Hester Chapone and other education and advice writers. In this sense, it could be a cure for boredom or worry, but also the instigator of a positive emotion, that of a joy of learning. Robert Darnton has argued that Rousseau intended that his readers would read to 'cope with life'.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, many of the readers studied here read to cope with daily feelings. Books did not implant these feelings into readers; books just offered a reflecting pool with which to contemplate one's own struggles and joys. The emotional worlds of those analysed here benefitted because of

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<sup>7</sup> Darnton, *Massacre*, p. 241.

reading experiences. In closing, the variety of findings presented here demonstrate how reading shaped and improved the lives studied, representing, once again, the transformative power of books.

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R. Challoner, *The garden of the soul: or, a manual of spiritual exercises and instructions for Christians* (Dublin, 1759).

H. Chapone, *Letters on the improvement of the mind, vol. II* (1775).

H. Chapone, *The works of Mrs Chapone: to which is prefixed an account of her life and character drawn up by her own family, 4 vols.* (1807).

P. Chesterfield, *Lord Chesterfield's maxims: or, a new plan of education* (1793).

G. Coleman, *The dramattick works of George Colman, volume the fourth* (1777).

G. Croft, *A plan of education* (1784).

E. Darwin, *A plan for the conduct of female education, in boarding schools* (1797).

P. Doddridge, *The rise and progress of religion in the soul* (1745).

N. Emmons, *The dignity of man* (Providence, 1787).

D. Fordyce, *Dialogues concerning education* (1757).



- S-F. de Genlis, *Lessons of a governess to her pupils, vol. I* (1792).
- A. Gerard, *An essay on taste...With three dissertations on the same subject. By Mr. de Voltaire. Mr. D'Alembert, F.R.S. Mr. de Montesquieu. Vol. 1* (1759).
- J. Gregory, *A father's legacy to his daughters* (Philadelphia, 1775).
- H. Home, *Elements of criticism. Vol. I* (Edinburgh, 1762).
- D. Hume, *Essays and treatises on several subjects...Containing essays, moral, political, and literary. Part I* (1760).
- D. Hume, *Essays, moral and political* (Edinburgh, 1741).
- W. Law, *A practical treatise upon Christian perfection* (1726).
- W. Law, *A serious call to a devout and holy life* (1729).
- J. Locke, *Essay concerning human understanding* (1690).
- J. Locke, *Some thoughts concerning education* (1693).
- C. Macaulay, *Letters on education. With observations on religious and metaphysical subjects* (1790).
- H. More, *Strictures on the modern system of female education, vol. I* (1799).
- J. Milton, *Of education* (1644).
- S. Pennington, *An unfortunate mother's advice to her absent daughters, in a letter to Miss Pennington* (1761).
- C. Reeve, *The progress of romance, through times, countries and manners* (Colchester, 1785).
- J. Rice, *A lecture on the importance and necessity of rendering the English language as a peculiar branch of female education: and on the mode of instruction* (1773).
- C. Rollin, *The method of teaching and studying the belles lettres, 4 vols.* (1734).
- R. Sheridan, *The rivals, a comedy. As it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden* (Dublin, 1775).

J. Sprange, *The Tunbridge Wells guide; or an account of the ancient and present state of that place* (Tunbridge Wells, 1786).

*The Spectator*, no. 397, 05 June 1712, vol. 6 (1713).

*The Spectator*, no. 463, 23 Aug. 1712, vol. 6 (1713).

*The Spectator*, no. 494, 26 Sept. 1712, vol. 7 (1713).

P. Wakefield, *Introduction to botany* (1796).

E. Wingate, *Of natural and artificiall arithmetique* (1630).

D. Waterland, *Advice to a young student with a method of study for the four first years* (Cambridge, 1760).

M. Weightman, *The polite reasoner: in letters addressed to a young lady* (1787).

A.F.M. Willich, *Lectures on diet and regimen: being a systematic inquiry into the most rational means of preserving health and prolonging life* (1799).

M. Wollstonecraft, *The female reader: or miscellaneous pieces in prose and verse...for the improvement of young women* (1789).

M. Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the education of daughters* (1787).

R. Wynne, *Essays on education by Milton, Locke, and the authors of the Spectator, &c.* (1761).

## Appendix 2

### **Books read by John Marsh, as mentioned in his diary**

The following is a list of some titles and authors read by John Marsh, as mentioned in his diary. The titles are listed as written by Marsh and the parentheses following contain my genre categories.

Fielding's works (novels and drama)

Don Quixote (novel and satire)

Adeline Mowbray (novel)

Blackstone's Commentaries (law)

Goldsmith's History of England (history)

The Spiritual Quixote (novel)

A.B.C. Dario Musico (biography)

Clarissa Harlowe (novel)

Burnet's Theory of Earth (astronomy)

Mr Hayley's Comedies in Rhyme (drama)

The Triumphs of Temper (essay)

Anson's Voyage round the World (travel account)

Analytical Review (periodical)

European Magazine (periodical)

History of China (history)

Lady Craven's Journey thro' the Crimea (travel account)

Memoirs of the late King of Prussia (biography)

Paine's Rights of Man (political philosophy)

Celestina (novel)

Humphrey Clinker (novel)

Life of Pope Sixtus 5<sup>th</sup> (biography)

Darwin's Zoonomia (anatomy)

Sullivan's view of Nature (travel account and philosophy)

Jackson's 30 Letters (?)

Moritz's Travels in England (travel account)

Mrs Radcliffe's novel of the Sicilian Romance (novel)

Dr Moore's works (medicine)

Voltaire's Candide (novella and satire)

Monk (novel)

Beggar Girl (novel)

"Maria" or the Vicarage (novel)

L'd McCartney's Embassy to China (travel account and geography)

Plato (philosophy)

Hoole's Tasso's Jerusalem (poetry)

Orlando Furioso (romantic epic poem)

Young Philosopher (novel)

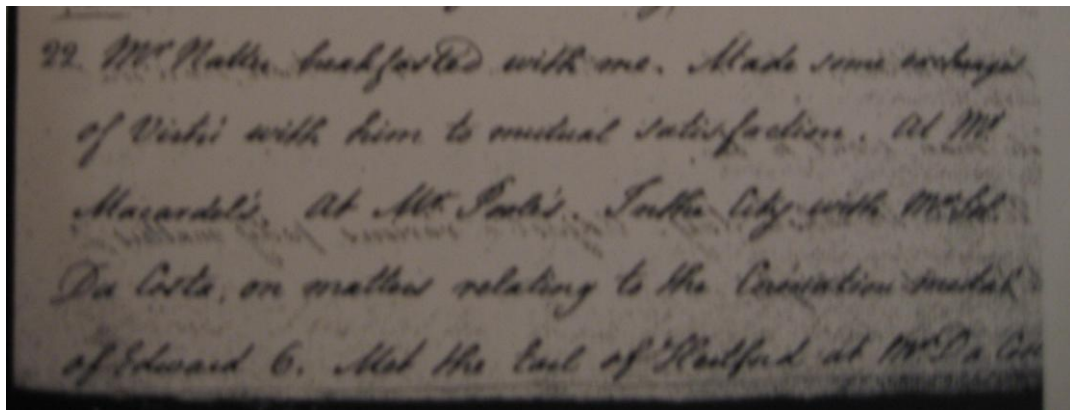
“Ned Evans” (novel)

Arthur Fitzalbini (novel)

“Modern Philosopher” (novel)

Irish Excursion (novel)

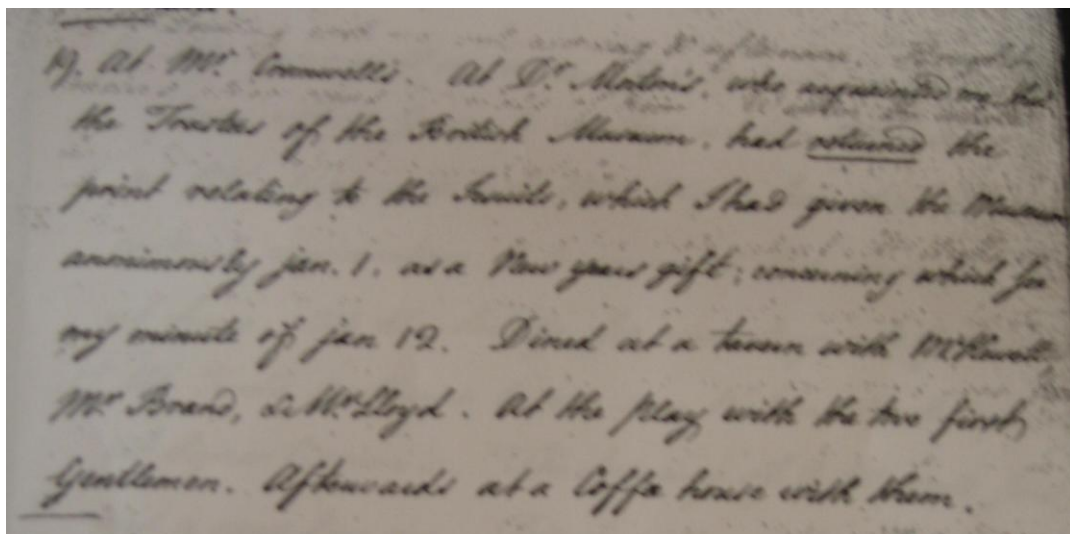
### Appendix 3



Excerpt from Thomas Hollis diary (22 May 1761):

'Mr Natter breakfasted with me. Made some exchanges of *Virtù* with him to mutual satisfaction. At Mr. Macardel's. At Mr. Poole's. In the City with Mr Sol. Da Costa, on matters relating to the Coronation medal of Edward 6. Met the Earl of Hertford...'

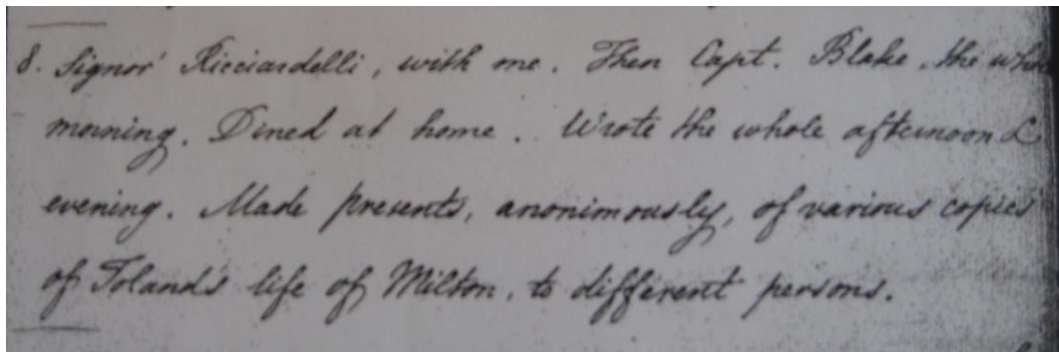
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Excerpt from Thomas Hollis' diary (19 Jan 1761):

'At Mr. Cromwell's. At Dr. Morton's, who acquainted me, that the Trustees of the British Museum had returned the print relating to the Jesuits, which I had given the Museum anonymously [sic] Jan. 1, as a New Years gift; concerning which see my minute of Jan 12.'

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S. Signor Ricciandelli, with me. Then Capt. Blake, the whole morning. Dined at home. Wrote the whole afternoon & evening. Made presents, anonymously, of various copies of Toland's life of Milton, to different persons.

Excerpt from Thomas Hollis diary (8 April 1761):

'Signor' Ricciandelli, with me. Then Capt. Blake, the whole morning. Dined at home. Wrote the whole afternoon and evening. Made presents, anonymously, of various copies of Toland's life of Milton, to different persons.'

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r Akinside; and if the Doctor's Genius, believing himself obliged, & having slept in that bed, should prompt him to write an ode to the Memory of John Milton, & the Assertors of British Liberty, that Gentleman would think himself abundantly recompensed. Within all the morning writing.'"'" data-bbox="187 366 853 680"/>

That the D<sup>r</sup> was greatly pleased with it, & with the compliment which I had desired him to deliver to him. This compliment was as follows: "An English Gentleman is desirous of having the honor to present a bed, which once belonged to John Milton, & on which he died, to D<sup>r</sup> Akinside; and if the Doctor's Genius, believing himself obliged, & having slept in that bed, should prompt him to write an ode to the Memory of John Milton, & the Assertors of British Liberty, that Gentleman would think himself abundantly recompensed. Within all the morning writing."

Excerpt from Thomas Hollis' diary (28 June 1761):

'An English Gentleman is desirous of having the honor [sic] to present a bed, which once belonged to John Milton, & on which he died, to Dr. Akinside [sic]; and if the Doctor's Genius, believing himself obliged, & having slept on that bed, should prompt him to write an ode to the Memory of John Milton, & the Assertors of British Liberty, that Gentleman would think himself abundantly recompensed.'

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# Appendix 4

| List of Books ment <sup>d</sup> . in y <sup>s</sup> . Vol.—         |  |
|---|--|
| 17 Hamway's Trav. in Russia, Persia, &c.                            | July 25  |
| 22 Hain's Elem <sup>t</sup> . of nat. Philos.                       | 27 Goldsm <sup>th</sup> 's hist. of y <sup>e</sup> . earth & animated nat. |
| 15 Niebuhr's Trav. thro' Arabia, &c.                                | Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1 Les leçons de l'histoire                              |
| 20 Bp. Horsley's sermons.   | 11 Galt's life of West—  |
| Thistlethwaite's D <sup>o</sup> —                                   | Sept. 6 Watson's Chem. Eps.  |
| Alison's D <sup>o</sup> —   | 8 Το το Διονύσιος Δοξίμω περι<br>Ἰππὸς ὑπομνήμα                            |
| 22 Leland's Demosthenes   | Welsted's Longin.  |
| 26 Warden's Lett.   | 10 Smith's D <sup>o</sup> —  |
| 29 ΑΙΟΧΙΝΩ ΟΚΑΤΑ ΚΥΘΟΙΦΩΝΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ<br>ΔΗΜΟΔΕΥΟΥ Ο ΠΕΡΙ ΟΙΚΕΡΑΝ ΔΟΧΟΥ. | 22 Middleton's Epist. of spec. & nat. hist.                                |
| 1 Norden's Trav. in Egypt & Nubia                                   | 27 Philibee's narrat.  |
| 8 Leland's Phil. of Macedon—  | 29 Davy's Elem. Chem. Philos.  |
| 15 Alciphron's Epistles   | Oct. 1 Crisp <sup>st</sup> . El <sup>t</sup> . of Logic                    |
| 18 Translat <sup>n</sup> . of Pausanias                             | 6 Landt's Descript. of y <sup>e</sup> . Toroe isl <sup>ds</sup> .          |
|   | 9 Thomson's syst. of chemist.  |
|   | 10 Born's Trav. in Hungary, &c.  |
|   | 21 Art of preserv <sup>g</sup> . y <sup>e</sup> . sight                    |
|   | 23 Holland's Trav. in y <sup>e</sup> . Ionian isles, &c.                   |
|   | Dec. 4 Beckmann's hist. of Invent <sup>s</sup> . & Discov <sup>s</sup> .   |
|   | 21 Hoole's sermons.  |
|   | 1818   |
|   | Jan <sup>y</sup> . 8 Obs. on y <sup>e</sup> . Ruins of Babylon             |
|   | 15 Adams's narrat.   |

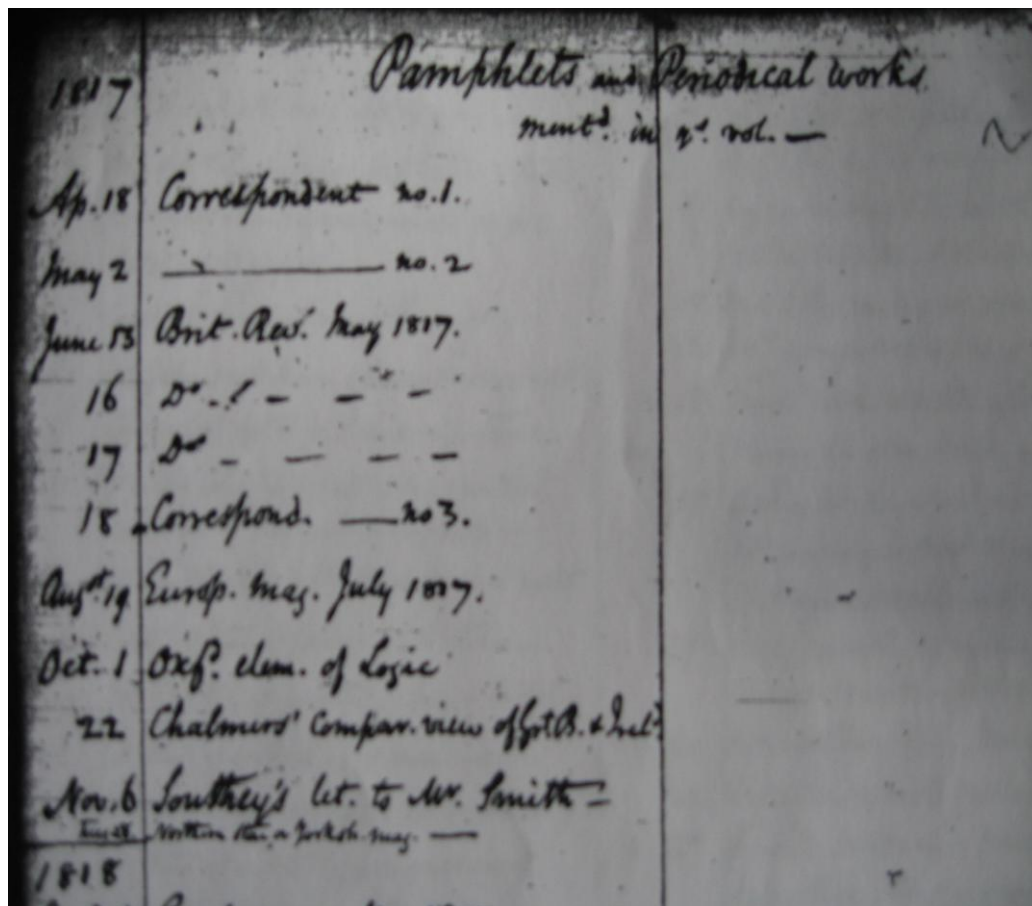
|   |  |
|---|--|
| May 1 ΔΗΜΟΔΕΥΟΥ Ο ΠΕΡΙ ΟΙΚΕΡΑΝ ΔΟΧΟΥ.                             | 22 Middleton's Epist. of spec. & nat. hist.                              |
| 1 Norden's Trav. in Egypt & Nubia                                 | 27 Philibee's narrat.  |
| 8 Leland's Phil. of Macedon—                                      | 29 Davy's Elem. Chem. Philos.  |
| 15 Alciphron's Epistles   | Oct. 1 Crisp <sup>st</sup> . El <sup>t</sup> . of Logic                  |
| 18 Translat <sup>n</sup> . of Pausanias                           | 6 Landt's Descript. of y <sup>e</sup> . Toroe isl <sup>ds</sup> .        |
| 28 ΔΗΜΟΔΕΥΟΥ ΔΟΧΟΙ ΕΚΔΕΚΤΟΙ                                       | 9 Thomson's syst. of chemist.  |
| June 9 Homer's Iliad Græc & Latine. Clarke                        | 10 Born's Trav. in Hungary, &c.  |
| .. Pope's Iliad   | 21 Art of preserv <sup>g</sup> . y <sup>e</sup> . sight                  |
| .. Itinéraire de Genève, &c.                                      | 23 Holland's Trav. in y <sup>e</sup> . Ionian isles, &c.                 |
| 10 Cowper's Iliad   | Dec. 4 Beckmann's hist. of Invent <sup>s</sup> . & Discov <sup>s</sup> . |
| 21 Act of Humboldt's Trav.  | 21 Hoole's sermons.  |
| Affect <sup>n</sup> . on Banks                                    | 1818   |
| English Bards & Scotch Reviewers                                  | Jan <sup>y</sup> . 8 Obs. on y <sup>e</sup> . Ruins of Babylon           |
| The bat. of Maida all b <sup>nd</sup> . in one 12 <sup>th</sup> . | 15 Adams's narrat.   |
| 22 Gregory's Leon of nature—                                      |  |
| July 5 Forbes' Orient. Mem <sup>o</sup> —                         |  |
| 13 Polakowski's sermons   |  |

Page from Anne Lister's diary (March 1817-January 1818):

'List of Books ment<sup>d</sup>. in y<sup>s</sup>. Vol.—'

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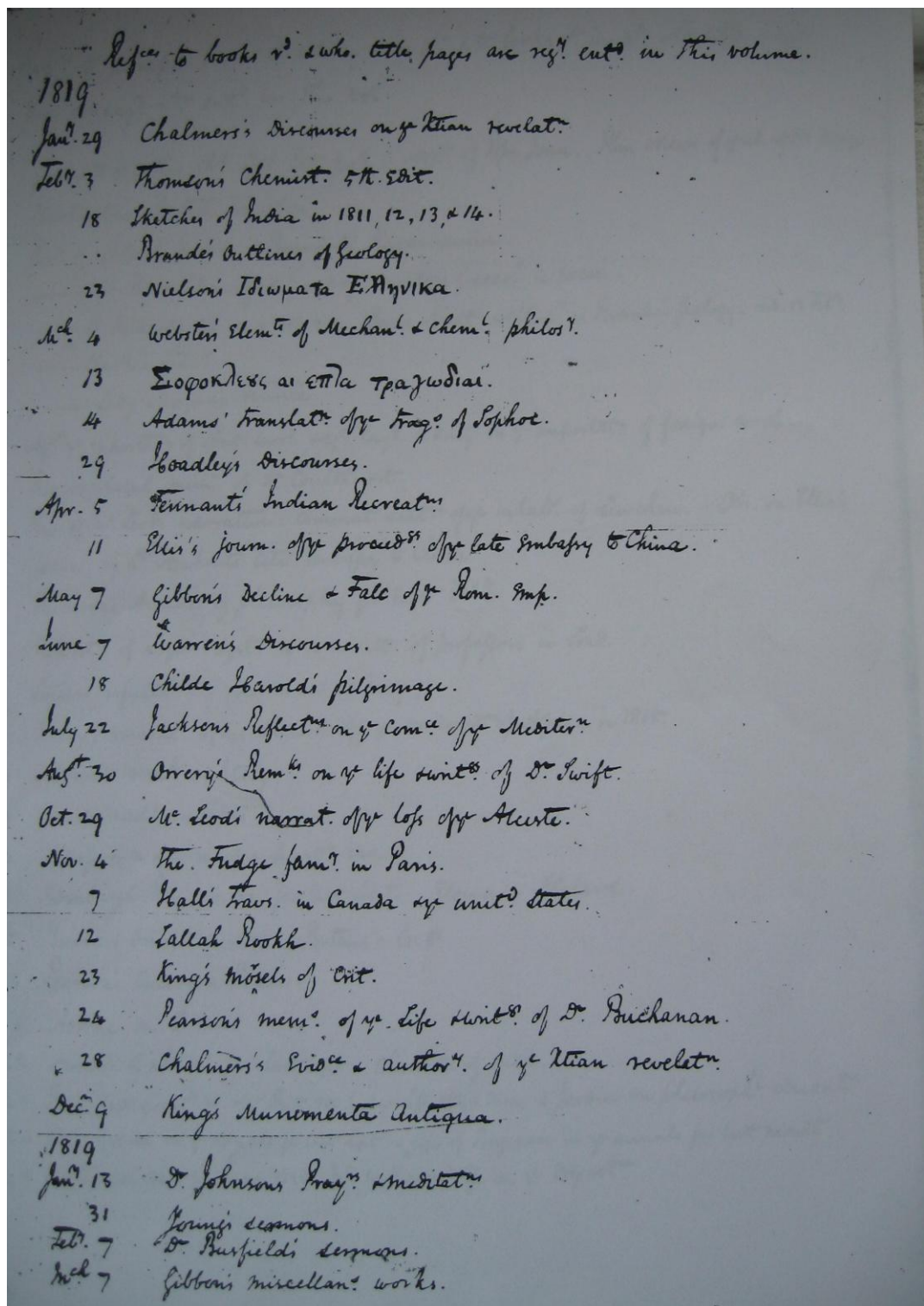




Page from Anne Lister's diary (April 1817-January 1818):

'Pamphlets and Periodical works ment<sup>d</sup>. in y<sup>s</sup>. vol.—'

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Page from Anne Lister's diary (1819):

'Ref<sup>ces</sup> to books r<sup>d</sup>. & who. title pages are reg<sup>d</sup>. ent<sup>d</sup>. in this volume.'

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Ref<sup>ces</sup> to pamph. & rev<sup>s</sup>. r<sup>d</sup>. wholly or in pt., & to books r<sup>d</sup>. in pt. who. title pages  
 are conseq<sup>y</sup>. n<sup>t</sup>. ent<sup>d</sup>. in this vol.

8  
 22 guide to y<sup>e</sup> cathed. ch<sup>h</sup>. of St. Pet. York. Acc<sup>t</sup>. of Pope Joan. Plan & Views of y<sup>e</sup> ab. of St. Den  
 15 Burlington's British Traveller.  
 24 Rev<sup>t</sup>. of Sallah Rookh & Beaumont's Karamania.  
 25 ——— L<sup>d</sup> Byron's "Mansfield", and of "Modern Greece" a poem.  
 27 ——— R. Selkirk's col. on y<sup>e</sup> red riv. "Basis of nat<sup>l</sup>. welfare" & Brande's geology. vis. 18 Feb<sup>r</sup>.  
 30 ——— Clarke's Trav<sup>ls</sup>.  
 1 ——— Lady Morgan's France.  
 5 As y<sup>e</sup> exportat<sup>n</sup>. of Brit. wool, say<sup>t</sup>. lay<sup>s</sup>. a duty on y<sup>e</sup> importat<sup>n</sup>. of foreign wool.  
 Biographical mem<sup>t</sup>. of Dr. Coulthurst.  
 2 Rev. of Mr. Leach's narrative. Diminut. stat<sup>st</sup>. of y<sup>e</sup> inhab<sup>t</sup>. of Leicesters. Obs. on Ellis's  
 Journ. of L<sup>d</sup>. Amherst's late Embassy to China  
 14 Thomson's Annals of Philosophy for last Feb<sup>r</sup>.  
 1 Report of Logie's Syst. by a comitt<sup>e</sup>. of professors in Lond.

Page from Anne Lister's diary (1818):

'Ref<sup>ces</sup> to pamph. & rev<sup>s</sup>. r<sup>d</sup>. wholly or in pt., & to books r<sup>d</sup>. in pt. who. title pages  
 are conseq<sup>y</sup>. n<sup>t</sup>. ent<sup>d</sup>. in this vol.'

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Page from Anne Lister's diary (February 1827). Contains **S** symbols in margins (top left), transcribed book title and details (indented section mid-page), Lister's coded and normal abbreviated English writing, and details on the weather in the margin (bottom left).

**S** symbols refer to Lister's own markings in her books.

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